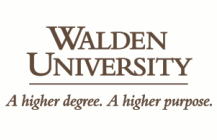

2017

Professional Development Experiences of Southern California Elementary School Teachers

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Kim E. Du Cloux

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Professional Development Experiences of

Southern California Elementary School Teachers

by

Kim E. Du Cloux

MA, California State University San Bernardino, 2003

BA, California State University San Bernardino, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Many researchers have concluded that teachers' frustration with the lack of quality teacher professional development can be addressed by acknowledging teachers' voices and involving them in the planning and design of their professional development. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with professional development in their schools or in their district in Southern California. Hargreaves and Fullan's concept of professional capital and Shulman's construct of knowledge growth in teaching provided the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions that framed the interview protocol for this study focused on teachers' experiences and ideas for professional development. Open coding of interviews with 8 convenience sample teachers determined common words, phrases, or sentences and constant comparison determined emergent themes. Findings that emerged were that district professional development lacked continuity and was experienced as overwhelming, ineffective, inadequate, and often insufficient. Teachers perceived that their needs were seldom met and their involvement in the planning and design of professional development was limited. The elementary teachers desire reflective processing time to become masters of their craft, as well as active involvement in planning and designing their professional development. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing insight to professional development designers that teachers desire involvement in planning training with more engagement and higher levels of learning which can contribute to improved student outcomes. Collaboration such as that found in professional learning communities could accomplish this goal.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my parents, Eugene and Joyce Du Cloux, who have always encouraged me to do and to be my best. From a little girl, they told me that nothing was impossible, and that I could do anything I set my mind and heart to. They have always supported me and have always been there for me. They allowed me to stand on their shoulders and achieve. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for being examples of faith, love, and perseverance. Thank you for being my parents. I love you!!

Acknowledgments

To God be the glory for the things He has truly done for I never would have made it without Him. He made the way out of what seemed like no way at times. He helped me persevere and make it through. Thank you, Lord!

I would like to once again thank my parents, Eugene and Joyce, my sister Kelli, and my nephew Tjah'Mari for their love, support, and encouragement. To my dearest friend, La Shan, who was an ear and a shoulder through it all; and her mom, my second mom, Ms. Charlene, who always had an encouraging word. To Dr. Robert L. Fairley and Sister Mary Fairley for always believing and encouraging me to keep with it no matter what. To an incredible host of supportive family, friends, and colleagues who urged, encouraged, and checked on me throughout the years. You know who you are. When things got challenging, I would see your faces, remember your words, and keep pressing forward. Thank you all so much!

Completing this educational journey certainly would not have been possible without the guidance, direction, and support of my chairperson, Dr. Cheryl Keen. With many emails, Skype sessions, and phone calls; through the triumphs and milestones, the tears and sometimes frustrations, you helped me view things from different perspectives, expand my thinking, and grow. You are a special person and your presence along this journey has been invaluable. To Dr. Estelle Jorgensen, thank you for pushing me beyond my comfort zone causing me to stretch and consider additional angles as well. I appreciate you both. Thank you.

Finally, to all my students throughout the years and for years to come. Being a teacher, I could not encourage you to set goals, follow your dreams, be determined, and persist, no matter the obstacles or how long it takes without leading by example. Dream big, plan, and get at it!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Professional development for teachers frequently engenders cynicism and provides little new or useful information (Smylie, 2014). In surveys of teachers' experiences with professional development activities provided by schools or school districts, educators reported the professional development had little value as a source of learning and were not useful for handling problems that arise in the classroom (Fuller, 2011; Varela, 2012; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Most professional development has been characterized as consisting of formal short-term or one-shot workshops, conferences, and training sessions with low-level learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Smylie, 2014).

An established body of research on the qualities and characteristics of effective professional development for teachers has been published in the form of professional development standards by the National Staff Development Council in 1994, 1995, and 2001, and the National Staff Development Council was renamed as Learning Forward in 2011. Smylie (2014) concluded that despite the emergence of national standards that can guide the design, implementation, and practice of professional development, professional development activities for teachers are generally ineffective and inadequate. Smylie posed that with what is known about effective professional development for teachers, there been little change in the prevailing professional development practices.

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (2013) stated that states and districts should replace fragmented, discrete, and ineffective workshops with professional development activities that provide sustained, coherent, and meaningful professional

learning opportunities for teachers. Smylie (2014) posited that the content of professional development should focus on the concrete tasks of teaching rather than abstract discussions, on specific pedagogical skills, and on how to teach various types of content to different learners. Smylie also suggested that one way to bring teacher professional development in line with proven national standards is to actively include and improve teacher leadership for designing and leading professional development, coaching, and mentoring.

The literature on professional development contains guidelines for effective professional development programs, justifications for professional development, and descriptions of various types of professional development (Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). Scholars have also addressed the strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes of professional development (DeVries, Jansen, & Van de Grift, 2013; Killion, 2013; Oregon Department of Education, 2014). What is missing from the literature on professional development is an understanding of teachers' active involvement and input in the planning and design of the professional development sessions they attend (Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013).

In this chapter, I provide a background of teacher involvement in professional development; a statement of the research problem and purpose, the research questions, and the nature of the study; definitions of terms and clarification of assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations of the study; and the significance of the study.

Background

The benefits of successful professional development can be varied, intrinsic, and extrinsic in nature. Although some professional development has been shown to be ineffective or low level (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Smylie, 2014), professional development can provide teachers with experiences that can increase self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and gains in resources (Desimone, 2011; Gulamhussein, 2013; Hill, 2015). Participation in professional development has been found to increase teacher buy-in and facilitate active participation in school management (Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013), impact teacher knowledge and enhance skill levels for use in the classroom (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010), as well as provide an avenue for shared experiences (Postholm, 2012).

Goldschmidt and Phelps's (2010) quantitative study of growth model of teacher knowledge surveyed 1927 participants of a professional development institute training program and found that the knowledge acquired during the training was perceived by teachers to have impacted teachers' performance in the classroom. Goldschmidt and Phelps also found that teachers with greater levels of prior knowledge exhibited greater longevity in knowledge retention and use of information acquired at the training. In an example of intrinsic benefits, DeVries et al. (2013) concluded from a survey of 260 teachers that participation in continuing professional development stimulated intrinsic motivators that strengthened teacher beliefs about learning and teaching.

Although researchers have shown that professional development can be beneficial, the concept of teacher buy-in or ownership of their professional development seldom surfaces in the literature (Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango &

Bayaga, 2013). Hargreaves (2003) observed that teacher input was often lacking in professional development. Potolea and Toma (2015), in their study that correlated legislation to the educational system, suggested that teachers should be considered the first decision-making body in their professional development. Potolea and Toma also found that the success of educational strategies in schools depend more on teachers who are permitted to make decisions about their learning sources, situations, and monitoring of their own progress.

Mackay (2015) suggested that professional development is an individual responsibility that is often overshadowed by the employer. Mackay conducted a study in which 27 human resource practitioners in a focus group setting answered questions regarding their views of their professional learning development and the ways that those learning experiences were viewed as useful in their current positions and future careers. Mackay concluded that when employees viewed professional development as having intrinsic benefits and were actively involved in determining the type of professional development they needed, increases in self-efficacy, self-worth, and confidence were experienced.

Similar to Mackay's study, Postholm's (2012) meta-analysis of 31 studies of teacher learning and teacher professional development concluded that teacher learning is not likely to occur without incorporating their previous knowledge, experiences, and needs. In addition, Postholm surmised that teacher cooperation and involvement are important components in their development. The findings of Gravani's (2012) qualitative case study interviewing 34 participants mirror Mackay's and Postholm's findings.

Gravani found there was an absence of mutual involvement and teachers had very little involvement in deciding the topics or methods of their training.

Studies have indicated the value of active participant involvement in professional development activities (DeVries et al., 2013; Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). However, the professional development received by teachers is largely ineffective because it does not alter teaching practices (Gulamhussein, 2013; Killion, 2013; Oregon Department of Education, 2014). There can be several reasons for this. For example, in the Learning Forward report of 2010, Mizell (2010) indicated that teacher professional development lacks quality because many of those responsible for organizing and developing professional development activities have not received formal training on how to design professional development. Mizell further indicated that current professional development designers at the district or school level merely mimic their own experiences as learners, whether good or bad, when designing learning experiences for teachers.

A chief complaint about current professional development practices by teachers is the "one size fits all" approach that often lacks quality planning upon which effective professional development is built (Oregon Department of Education, 2014). The primary method of professional development delivery, the workshop, has been identified as a barrier to effective professional development (Gulamhussein, 2013). According to Gulamhussein (2013), 90% of teachers attend traditional workshop-style professional development during a school year. This method of training is passive in nature, ignores teachers as learners, and does not consider teachers' prior knowledge (Gulahussein,

2013). High quality professional development develops educators' knowledge, skills, and practices (Killion, 2013; Oregon Department of Education, 2014; Yendol-Hoppey & Fichtman, 2010). High quality professional development is different from the type of professional development educators are used to because high quality professional development addresses the needs of specific learners and incorporates diverse learning styles in planning and designing learning and knowledge growth activities for adult learners (Gulamhussein, 2013, Killion, 2013; Mizell, 2010; Oregon Department of Education, 2014). Teachers are typically not involved in the planning or design of their own professional development activities (Gulamhussein, 2013). There is a place for active teacher involvement in the planning and design of their own professional development training.

There is a gap in the literature concerning elementary teachers' voices, involvement, and interpretations of their experiences with the planning and designing of their professional development. By exploring teachers' experiences, I sought to present Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of their experiences with professional development at their school or in their district. This study may provide information on the extent to which the inclusion of teachers' knowledge, needs, and experiences in the planning and design processes of their professional development activities is perceived to make a contribution to more effective professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Studies have indicated that professional development can be beneficial; however, the concept of teacher buy-in or ownership of their professional development seldom surfaces in the literature (Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). Little to no acknowledgment or consideration of teacher knowledge, experiences, or diversity of skills is taken into account when designing and delivering professional development (Petrie & McGee, 2012). The lack of active teacher involvement in the planning and design of professional development can further the cynicism felt and expressed by teachers toward the value of professional development (Smylie, 2014). Exclusion from the planning and design stages of professional development can negatively impact the goal of effective professional development designed for teachers (Mizell, 2010; Wei et al., 2010). The inclusion of teachers' knowledge, experiences, and needs can facilitate the further development of teachers' knowledge and expand their skill sets so that teachers' and students' learning needs are met (Mizell, 2010).

Mizell (2010) claimed that those responsible for organizing professional development often have had no formal training; professional development training sessions are typically planned, designed, and led by persons who have been out of the classroom anywhere from 2–10 plus years. At other times, a small cohort of teachers may be selected to attend a 3 to 5-day training on a new curriculum that is condensed to a single day workshop format for all other teachers responsible for using the new curriculum. The professional development received by teachers in the school district considered in this research exemplifies Mizell's claim. The current extent of teacher

involvement in the planning and design of professional development is completing a yearly needs assessment survey with results that are seldom if ever published. According to the Oregon Department of Education (2014), use of a simple survey does not provide the in depth needs assessment for planning high quality professional development.

The current district practices are not responsive to teachers' experiences, talents, concerns, or learning needs nor do they lead to effective professional development that changes or improves teaching practices. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) stated that the use of, attention to, and support of the knowledge teachers possess by administrators, educational leaders, and designers of professional development programs can further increase teacher knowledge, thus increasing their professional capital. Hargreaves and Fullan believed that incorporating teachers' existing knowledge, experiences, and needs into their educational and professional development endeavors can increase the effectiveness of professional development programs because better informed decision making can take place. Teachers should be actively involved in the planning and design of professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Postholm, 2012; Potolea & Toma, 2015, Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). The findings from this study may provide information on the extent to which the inclusion of Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers' knowledge, needs, and experiences in the planning and design stages of their professional development can contribute to more effective school and district professional development activities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with professional development training at their school or in their district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and designing future professional development at their school or in their district. The phenomenon of interest was teachers' experience with professional development at their school site or within their school district.

Research Questions

The research questions and sub questions for this study were

RQ1: How do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers define professional development?

RQ2: What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school or in their district?

SQ1: What instructional strategies learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

SQ2: What curricular guidelines learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

RQ3: How have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and design of their professional development training at their school or in their district?

RQ4: What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in contributing to the planning and design of professional development training at their school or in their district?

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was a combination of Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital and Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching. Professional capital, in Hargreaves and Fullan's view, melds human capital – the talent and experiences of the individual; social capital – the combined talents, knowledge, and experiences of a group of teachers; and decisional capital – the accumulated knowledge and experiences used for making judgments about items pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and student learning. It involves a movement from traditional hierarchical "power over" teachers to a new organizational structure that embraces "power with" teachers.

According to Shulman (1986), the following are prerequisites for teaching children: knowledge of subject matter, adept awareness of general literacy instruction, and curricular knowledge. Knowledge growth in teaching is examined in the ways that teachers acquire, advance, and apply knowledge. A teacher's knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum can be said to result in increased teacher's self-efficacy (Shulman, 1986).

Morewood et al.'s (2010) study used qualitative interviews of seven teachers guided by Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching as a framework to describe teachers' perceptions of the influence professional development had on their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum. Morewood et al. found that professional development did influence teachers' content, pedagogical, and curricular knowledge. However, content knowledge was influenced more than pedagogical and curriculum knowledge. Attendance, as opposed to being involved in the planning or designing of professional development training sessions, was the extent of teacher participation. Morewood et al. concluded that teachers have diverse learning needs that can be met by providing teachers with choices that coincide with their professional learning goals.

Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital and Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching converge on the concept of knowledge. Professional capital represents accumulated and existing knowledge where the construct of knowledge growth describes the acquisition of knowledge. Hargreaves and Fullan stated that the use of, attention to, and support of the knowledge teachers possess by administrators, educational leaders, and designers of professional development programs can further increase teacher knowledge, thus increasing their professional capital. Hargreaves and Fullan believed that incorporating teachers' existing knowledge, experiences, and needs into their educational and professional development endeavors can increase the effectiveness of professional development programs because better informed decision making can take place. According to Hargreaves and Fullan, this is

one way that teachers can take a leadership role in improving the quality of the teaching profession. Hargreaves and Fullan's concept of professional capital and Shulman's construct of knowledge growth in teaching were used in relation to teachers' responses about their experiences with planning, designing, and involvement in professional development in their school and in the district. Chapter 2 contains a more thorough explanation of the conceptual framework.

Nature of Study

Qualitative researchers explore and describe socially constructed meanings developed by individuals as a result of their interactions with their world (Merriam, 2009). When the goal is to understand the meanings that people have associated with an occurrence, the study will be descriptive in nature. A basic qualitative study can include data collected through interviews, observations, or analysis of documents to provide rich, descriptive accounts of participants' experiences (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Percy, Koster, & Koster, 2015).

In this basic qualitative study, I focused on teachers' interpretations of their experiences with professional development. I interviewed eight 3rd through 5th grade teachers in one Southern California school district in order to provide interpretations of their experiences with professional development training. These grades were selected because state testing occurs at these grade levels, and the majority of professional development is geared toward improving student performance on the state tests. In this study, I sought to describe the experiences of participants who work in three elementary schools within a 5-mile radius and did not take into account the other nine elementary

schools in the district. The original anticipated number of participants was between 10-12 teachers. This changed because a point of saturation, where the interview responses became redundant, occurred with eight interviews. Data collection occurred via the use of a semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and artifacts, such as lesson plans or materials received from professional development training that teachers chose to share occurred. The constructs of professional capital and knowledge growth in teaching provided the data analysis basis for coding and examining emergent themes. Inductive coding analyzes data by aggregating information into meaningful categories for consistent manipulation (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008), was used.

Definitions and Terms

The following are terms and definitions that were used in this study of teachers' interpretations of professional development at their school or in their district.

Effective professional development: Effective professional development equips teachers with knowledge and strategies to meet the learning needs of students. (Gulamhussein, 2013; Mezill, 2010).

Knowledge growth in teaching: The merging of the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and curricular knowledge that teachers need in order to teach children (Shulman, 1986).

Professional capital: The combination of teachers' human capital, social capital, and decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Professional development: The "systematic processes that bring about teacher changes in attitudes, beliefs, and practices to impact upon the learning outcomes of students" (McDonald, 2009, p. 624).

Assumptions

According to Simon (2011), assumptions are those elements surrounding a study that are beyond the control of the researcher but are still important to the study. These propositions are believed to be true but cannot be determined as true. First, it was assumed that teachers would provide honest in-depth answers to the interview questions. Another assumption was that teachers would engage in authentic dialogue and speak freely about their thoughts and experiences related to professional development activities. A third assumption was that the time and physical location of the interviews would not influence interviewee responses. Interviews took place at a location convenient to the participants. Finally, as I listened for school site and district professional development experiences and uses of the training material in their classroom activities in the past academic school year, I assumed that their memories of professional development experiences and application of knowledge growth were more accurate than if I inquired about older professional development experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

According to Creswell (2003), delimitations narrow the scope of a study. Delimitations are those elements that outline the boundaries and limit the scope of a study (Simon, 2011). First, I focused on a sample of Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers in order to interpret teachers' experiences with professional development at their

school or in their district. These grades were selected because state testing occurs at these grade levels and the majority of professional development is geared toward improving student performance on the state tests. Participants were certified teachers who worked in one of the three neighborhood schools within a 5-mile radius in the district. Data were not collected from administrators, substitute teachers, or any other stakeholders. Second, I only included results from this population of teachers, thus omitting teachers from other grades and schools as well as administrators.

I did not seek to do a comparison of the experiences of teachers from schools outside of the district. The data were only collected at one point in time via interviews. Staff interactions during meetings or during professional development were not observed. I listened for school and district professional development experiences that occurred in the past academic school year. I did not focus on professional development experiences outside of the district, such as statewide conferences or graduate studies.

Limitations

Often beyond the researcher's control, a study's limitations are the potential shortcomings or weaknesses that can affect the study's results or reach of the inferences drawn (Creswell & Piano Clark, 2007; Simon, 2011). The following are possible limitations for this study. The findings cannot be generalized due to the small population to be studied. I was the sole person responsible for collecting the data. Potential researcher bias from working in the district, having taught and 4th and 5th grades for the majority of my career and have attended professional development trainings with the participants was addressed through member validation. Member checking was used to

allow each participant to review the descriptive interpretation of their responses to ensure accuracy of his or her intended responses. The types of professional development training I am not likely to have heard about were those related to administrative professional development or training for parents.

Significance of the Study

This study may provide insight into teachers' interpretations of experiences with professional development and the influence this has on their instructional and curricular classroom activities. The study findings may be valuable to school administrators and trainers as it can contribute to strategies and methods for designing effective teacher professional development that is aligned with school district and state goals. If teachers' professional development needs are met, they may be better positioned to meet the needs of their students. Improving the quality of teaching through their active incorporation in professional development may have social implications for student learning and achievement as well as education in general.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced the components of the study. These components of the study included the background, purpose, problem statement, limitations, assumptions, and research questions. The purpose of this study was to provide interpretations of Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with professional development at their school or in their district. In Chapter 2, I review the search strategy for the literature review and present a review of the current literature elaborating on the conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of: professional development training at their school or in their district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and designing future professional development at their school or in their district.

Because professional development received by teachers is often deemed ineffective (Smylie, 2014) due in part to the use of workshop-style trainings (Gulamhussein, 2013) and the lack of responsiveness to the learning needs of teachers (Mezill, 2010), teachers may benefit from having a greater role in the planning and design of their professional development activities (Gravani, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Potolea & Toma, 2015). Effective professional development is responsive to teachers' needs and causes positive change in classroom teaching practices that meet the learning needs of students (Gulamhussein, 2013; Mizell, 2010). Current district professional development practices are nonresponsive to teachers' learning needs, this means that changes may not occur in teaching practices as a result of the professional development received. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) believed that incorporating teachers' existing knowledge, experiences, and needs into their professional development activities can increase the effectiveness of professional development programs because needs-based decision making can occur. Teachers should be actively involved in the planning and design of professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Postholm, 2012; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013).

Professional development is usually derived from several elements. These elements include the availability of professional development, teacher perceptions, district guidance, local school missions, state regulations, and methods for delivering professional development (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, & Goe, 2011; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010; Mackay, 2015; Smylie, 2014). Teachers' input and experiences are often disregarded when administrators plan professional development activities (Desimone, 2011; Gravani, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). The lack of active teacher involvement in the planning and design of professional development can further cynicism felt and expressed by teachers toward the value of professional development (Smylie, 2014). This could negatively impact the goal of effective professional development and the desired improvement in teachers' instruction (Mizell, 2010; Wei et al., 2010).

Professional development activities for teachers have been found to have better outcomes when the experiences of teachers are incorporated and when the professional development activities provide tools and strategies that improve teaching practices, content knowledge, and comprehension of curriculum (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010; Postholm, 2012; Stoll et al., 2012). Goldschimdt and Phelp's (2010) study of 1927 participants found that professional development can result in longevity of knowledge when teachers' knowledge and experiences are taken into account. Postholm's (2012) meta-analysis of 31 studies revealed that teacher learning occurs when their previous knowledge is incorporated into their professional development. Similarly, Stoll et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis of 74 studies on best practices for professional development

recognized that what teachers already know influences their learning and performance. Although research on professional development exists, research interpreting teachers' experiences with professional development in regards to planning and designing is scant. These best practices and the inclusion of teachers' experiences are not the common practice of professional development within the schools or school district under study.

In this chapter, I analyze Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital and Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching as the conceptual framework for this study as well as examine the variables associated with professional development, teacher participation in professional development, the link between professional development, and teacher performance.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review includes research-based and theoretical sources from journal articles, seminal works, and books. Full-text journal articles were collected from peer-reviewed journals. Databases used included Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete, EBSCO, Pro Quest, Sage Publications, and Google Scholar. Other sources of research included the U.S. Department of Education and the California Department of Education websites and dissertations. Search terms, descriptors and keywords used included the following: *teacher perceptions, teacher beliefs, pedagogy, professional capital, social capital, human capital, knowledge growth in teaching, professional development, teacher involvement in professional development, professional learning, staff development, adult learning theory, education reform in the United States, efficacy, self-efficacy, teacher efficacy,* and *teacher learning.*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was composed of two parts. The first was Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital and the second was Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching. According to Hargreaves and Fullan, professional capital is the sum of teachers' human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. Teachers' professional capital is a largely untapped resource when it comes to the planning and design of professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). According to Shulman, knowledge of subject matter, a deep understanding of how to teach general literacy skills, and curricular knowledge are prerequisites for teaching children. The components of Shulman's construct of knowledge growth in teaching (content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and curriculum knowledge) along with Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital served as the lens for exploring and analyzing teachers' experiences in order to describe their participation in the planning and designing of professional development to meet their needs as teachers in learning effective practices, delivering content, and understanding overall curricular goals.

Professional Capital

With the ultimate goal of elevating the teaching profession as a whole by integrating the human capital, social capital, and decisional capital teachers possess, Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital served as part of the conceptual framework for this study. Hargreaves and Fullan claimed that making decisions is what professionalism is all about (p. 5). The professional capital view of teaching includes "teaching as technically sophisticated and difficult, requiring high

levels of education and long periods of training, perfected through continuous improvement, involving wise judgement, informed by evidence and experience, and collective in accomplishment and responsibility" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 14). This approach exhibits a shift from the quality of the individual teacher to the quality of the teaching profession. Hargreaves and Fullan argued that the quality of teaching has to improve in order for the quality of instruction and student achievement to improve. If professional development is the means of improving the quality of teaching and education as a whole (Desimone, 2011; Porter et al., 2011), then teachers should be involved in planning and designing decisions regarding their professional development (Desimone, 2011; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013).

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), the business capital approach views teaching as emotionally demanding, but technically simple, requiring moderate to low levels of intellect that results from enthusiasm, hard work, and raw talent. According to the business capital approach, performance is data-driven with hard measurable results that are easily replaced by technology (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 14). Hargreaves and Fullan concluded that the business capital model of teaching short changes students and restricts the collective creative capabilities of teachers.

The acknowledgment and use of professional capital, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), is needed to "transform the entire teaching profession" (p. 16). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggested that this transformation of the teaching profession happens in environments that are collaborative and collective in nature. Cultures of fear, intimidation, and retaliation do not empower teachers to trust, take risks,

share, or engage in collaborative activities (Hirsch & Emerick, 2013). Like other professions, teaching, according to Hargreaves and Fullan, is affected by the environment and the culture of the workplace. The findings of studies by Fernet, Guay, Senecal and Austin (2012), Maphalala (2014), and Murray (2014) confirmed the assumptions of Hargreaves and Fullan that teacher work environments have a great impact on the work that teachers do or do not do in the classroom, and professional development experiences are settings that can build and reinforce school climate.

A key charge of Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) work is "teaching like a pro" with the end result being the improvement of the individual, the raising of team performance levels, and the increasing of quality across the profession (p. 23). The use of professional capital incorporates the facets of human, social, and decisional capital to meet this objective. Using professional capital involves reflective practices of questioning, analyzing, continuously improving, planning, developing, practicing, refining, and doing so collectively and collaboratively.

Hargreaves and Fullan identified professional capital as a combination of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. Decisional capital, according to Hargreaves and Fullan, means that within various professions the ability and importance of making decisions is significant. According to Fullan and Hargreaves (2012), teachers are able to assess a situation, causes, and problems and determine the best approach for addressing them. This is decisional capital. In order for the quality of the teaching profession to increase, Hargreaves and Fullan suggested that decisions about student learning and instruction need to be made by those most responsible for instructing and teaching

students, the teachers. Decisional capital includes the strengths of human capital (the talents of the individual) and the assets of social capital (the combined experiences and knowledge of a group of teachers in judgements and decisions made regarding curriculum, planning, lessons, and instruction).

Patton, Parker, and Pratt (2013) used Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital as the premise in their study on meaningful professional development. Patton et al. described professional capital as an asset combining human, social, and decisional capital that teachers use in decision making within complex situations. The purpose of the Patton et al. study was to examine the pedagogy teachers employed within physical education professional development. Within this context the authors of this study used Hargreaves and Fullan's proposition that "by investing in and putting teachers at the forefront of change, the development of professional capital allows both teachers and schools to reach their full potential" (Patton et al., 2013, para. 1). Patton et al.'s analysis of focus group interviews, informal conversational interviews, field notes, and artifacts found that when professional development supports the professional capital of teachers, teachers were engaged and active participants, the professional development was meaningful, and the goal of positively impacting teaching practices was accomplished.

Studies conducted by Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, and Burke (2010) and Leana (2011) demonstrated the importance of decisions that are made as a result or extension of social capital. Daly et al. conducted a study to determine the extent to which social networks within school settings facilitate or constrain reform efforts. The premise of the

study was that "existing social relationships among school staff are rarely taken into account when enacting reform" (Daly et al., 2010, p. 1). Their exploratory case study of three social networks among teachers from five schools during the time of a district-wide reform effort utilized social network theory as its theoretical framework. Data was collected through use of a social network analysis, grade level teacher work samples, and semistructured interviews. Daly et al. found that it is the quality of those relationships or ties between individuals within the network that sets the stage for the sharing and relaying of information. Educators in more densely connected networks reported ownership and being empowered to set goals and participate in decision making. Teams with more interactions appeared to be better able to design and share pedagogical strategies. The more stable and reciprocal the collaborative relationships, the more focused the team was on collectively discussing and refining instructional practices.

Social capital is a basic foundational concept of social network theory. Daly et al. surmised that social capital relates to resources that exist with social relationships among individuals compared to the resources of a particular individual. In addition, Daly et al. explained social capital as a system or network of social relations through which the knowledge and experiences of a collective can be tapped into, referenced, consulted, or used as needed.

Approaching the concept of social capital from an angle that differed from Daly et al. (2010), Leana (2011) presented social capital as a means to address the question "Who does a teacher go to with questions or when information or advice are needed?" Leana

found that teachers will ask other teachers before they ask administrators or other identified experts. This is social capital in action.

According to Leana, teacher human capital is the "cumulative abilities, knowledge, and skills developed through formal education and on-the-job experiences" of an individual teacher where social capital "resides in the relationships among teachers" (p. 32). Leana's (2011) study was a large-scale project that followed more than 1000 4th and 5th grade teachers in a representative sample of 130 elementary schools across New York City. This study examined changes in student math achievement scores after a year's instruction from particular teachers. Also examined was teacher human capital that included classroom encounters and the acquisition of scholarly practice. Leana obtained data through the use of scenarios and surveys completed by teachers as well as student math test results.

Leana found that teachers consult experts or the principal far less likely and less frequently than they do other teachers. Teachers were twice as likely to consult a colleague before consulting an expert and four times as likely to ask a colleague before asking the principal. Leana concluded "that when relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction – that is, when social capital is strong – student achievement scores improve" (p. 33). Leana quoted a participating teacher who stated, "Teaching is not an isolated activity. If it is done well, it has been done collaboratively over time" (p. 33). Leana also found that teacher social capital predicted student achievement more than individual teacher experience or ability in the classroom. Leana stated that "if a teacher's social capital was just one standard

deviation higher than the average, the students' math scores increased by 5.7 percent" (p. 33). Students showed higher gains in math achievement when their teachers reported frequent conversations with peers regarding math instruction. Social capital losses can be detrimental to student achievement. Building social capital can be a costly and challenging venture, but Leana concluded that the return on investing in teacher social capital can yield greater assets in student performance (p. 35).

Decisional capital, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), is the accumulated knowledge and experiences of teacher collectives used for making judgements about items pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and student learning. For teachers, decision-making often involves taking into account factors outside the classroom that impact what takes place in the classroom. According to Fuller (2011), "decision making [for teachers] involves giving consideration to a matter, identifying the desired end result, determining the options to reach the end result, and then selecting the most suitable option to achieve the desired result" (p. 4). Decisions teachers make influence student learning. Teachers make decisions all day to promote student learning. Schoenfeld (2011) found that what matters in teaching situations is the teacher's knowledge inventory, which encompasses the human and social capital that provides the basis for decisional capital. The decision-making expertise of teachers should apply to and be incorporated into their professional development.

In a study regarding teacher involvement in decision-making, Wadesango and Bayaga (2013) found that teachers desired more involvement in school issues and that they would like to be consulted on matters before decisions were made. Wadesango and

Bayaga utilized semistructured interviews that allowed participants to respond openly regarding their experiences. This study also found that when teachers participated in decision making, they perceived themselves as becoming more active, having an increased sense of ownership, and tending to be more motivated in achieving organizational objectives (Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). Wadesango and Bayaga recommended empowerment for teachers to make decisions beyond the classroom. In addition, Wadesango and Bayaga found that when creativity is stimulated, trust is engendered among stakeholders, and the quality of the school improves. Wadesango and Bayaga demonstrated the value of involving teachers in making decisions regarding aspects of their practice and professional development is one of those aspects.

Knowledge Growth in Teaching

Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching includes three key components: content knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, and curricular knowledge. Each, according to Shulman, are essential when teaching children. Shulman posited that teachers' knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum develop deeply when teachers are committed to life-long learning. Teachers must understand that something is so and why it is so. Content knowledge is substantive and syntactic. Both, according to Shulman, are needed. Substantive knowledge of a subject deals with the ways in which the basic concepts and principles are organized. Syntactic knowledge of a subject includes the truths or validity of a given subject. Syntactic knowledge is the set of rules for determining what is legitimate within the bounds of a particular subject (Shulman, 1986).

Knowledge of pedagogy deals with the manners in which a subject is composed and represented that makes it understandable for others. According to Shulman (1986), a teacher must have a large inventory of alternate forms of representing and presenting information to reach a wide range of student learning styles. This inventory is developed from research-based practices, as well as from wisdom or experiences. Pedagogical knowledge includes the understanding of what makes the learning of particular topics easy or difficult so that information can be presented in a manner that will be understood by the learner.

Curricular knowledge according to Shulman (1986), represents the full range of materials and programs designed and needed for teaching particular subjects at particular levels and knowing when to use what is appropriate. Curricular knowledge also encompasses knowing the scope of instruction and how knowledge at certain levels is built upon like the vertical alignment of subjects in grade levels or the horizontal alignment of concepts across subjects at a particular grade level (Morewood et al., 2010; Shulman, 1986). Teachers indicated that professional development influenced their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum in a qualitative study conducted by Morewood et al. (2010).

Morewood et al. (2010) used Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching in a qualitative study and found that as teachers garnered a better understanding of the connections between the content taught, the pedagogy selected, and the curriculum used; changes were seen in their overall teaching practices. Morewood et al. concluded that a deep understanding of the three areas and how content, pedagogy, and curriculum

are coupled creates an environment where effective instructional practices occur. The components of Shulman's knowledge growth in teaching and Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital were used as the framework for this study to analyze teachers' responses about their planning, designing, and involvement experiences in professional development.

Professional Development

This section presents a review of empirical works pertaining to teacher professional development. It is through professional development that teachers remain up-to-date regarding subject matter content knowledge, teaching practices, and collaboration with colleagues. Professional development is a means by which teachers can increase competency skills to provide higher quality direction; it is a process not an event (Lee & Buxton, 2013; Morewood & Bean, 2009; Soine & Lumpe, 2014). Teachers' reactions to professional development change over time as their level of comfort and competency with the new initiative increases (White et al., 2012).

In providing a general background of professional development, professional development comes in different forms that include workshops, observational visits to other schools, university courses, individual or collaborative research, lesson study, district and school created professional development, face-to-face professional educational conferences, and online conferences (Borko, 2004). According to Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011), it is necessary for teachers to have "ongoing access to technical skills, complex knowledge, sophisticated tools, and research-based techniques" to ensure current and continued success with all students (p. 1).

Researchers identified five characteristics of high-quality professional development. Those five characteristics were alignment with local, state, and federal goals; focus on core content and modeling of teaching practices; "opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies; provision for collaboration among teachers, and a component of reciprocal feedback and follow-up" (Archibald et al., 2011, p. 12). Archibald et al. concluded that when professional learning activities exhibited the listed characteristics, teacher buy-in was substantial and students' needs were better met. In contrast, Darling-Hammond (2011) reported that most professional development experiences do not follow these practices and over half of all U. S. teachers were dissatisfied with professional development opportunities.

Little acknowledgment or consideration of teacher knowledge, experiences, or diversity of skills is taken into account when designing and delivering professional development (Petrie & McGee, 2012). Petrie and McGee's qualitative study explored how the delivery method used for professional development influenced what and how teachers learned and how their learning impacted their classroom practices. Petrie and McGee concluded that teacher learning was largely ignored and often taken for granted with the assumption that teachers will learn and apply programs presented to them. In regards to the inclusion of teacher experiences, Mackay (2015) also found that the knowledge and experiences employees possess should be treated as a valuable resource. Harnessing employees' skills and knowledge can increase an organizations capacity for success (Mackay, 2015). Professional development is deemed effective when positive changes to instruction occur due to teacher participation. The goal of professional

development is to deepen teachers' knowledge and pedagogy (Morewood et al., 2010; Shulman, 1986; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013).

Effective professional development should begin with a collaborative analysis of student needs so that professional learning can be designed with the goal of strengthening teacher capacity (Gulahussein, 2013; Killion, 2013). With the similarities and slight differences of student needs in focus, effective or high-quality professional development can be summed up as that which is delivered in a manner that directly impacts teaching practices that clearly relate to student learning (Archibald et al., 2011; Mackay, 2012; Soine & Lumpe, 2014).

Effective professional development is a means for improving teaching practices and ultimately student achievement. The value of professional development was increased when it supplied new or different ways for understanding students (Archibald et al., 2011; Mackay, 2012; Soine & Lumpe, 2014). Teachers often found ways to teach all of their students more effectively when the professional development they received was genuine and collaborative and advanced their knowledge and skills (Gabriel et al., 2011; Petrie & McGee, 2012; Stewart, 2014). Gabriel et al. (2011) surmised that when teachers have the freedom to participate in individual and group decision making, teachers feel supported, trusted, and valued as professionals, and provide a means of empowering teachers and respecting their voices.

A meta-analysis of 54 studies of professional development regarding pedagogy, content, or classroom management revealed common themes that positively influenced teacher instruction and student achievement. These included the involvement of teachers

in the identification of what they need to learn, the development of the learning opportunities, and the processes to be used. In addition, professional development should be of considerable duration, focused on specific content strategies, and collectively involve educators with active learning as opposed to passive disengagement (Hawley & Valli, 2007).

Researchers advocating for effective professional development (Gabriel et al., 2011; Lee & Buxton, 2013; Mistretta, 2012; Petrie & McGee, 2012; Stewart, 2014) suggested that professional development activities be content-specific, involve active ongoing learning for the attainment of mastery, and provide opportunities for collaboration. Research on effective teacher professional development supports the suggestions made by these advocates. Hough's (2011) mixed method study investigated effective professional development characteristics as they related to character education and classroom management approaches at the middle school level. Hough's analysis survey and feedback data revealed that the type of professional development found most effective met the needs of teachers and students, incorporated teacher background and experience, contained presentations by experts, had leadership support, and were aligned with school goals. The findings of Lee and Buxton's (2013) study regarding professional development for advancing literacy and science achievement for English language learners, support the premise that effective professional development should be centered on teacher needs and not merely a means of providing teachers with content and practice.

A case study conducted by Gibson and Brooks (2012) composed of surveys, interviews, and classroom observations about a group of teachers from a Canadian school

district who implemented a new social studies curriculum identified the lack of quality professional development as the primary reason that the implementation of the new curriculum was more challenging and arduous. Professional development was conducted in the middle of the school year. This required teachers to be out of their classrooms and prepare plans for substitute teachers. The professional development consisted of three afternoon sessions with no follow-up provided during the rest of the school year. Teachers found the professional development sessions theoretical and ambiguous as well as lacking concrete applications for incorporating the training into actual instructional practices. Gibson and Brooks found that supportive colleagues and the building of leadership were two positive factors identified by teachers who successfully implemented the new curriculum. Effective professional development in a supportive environment that incorporates teachers' experiences, needs, and knowledge produce positive results for teachers and students (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Hough, 2011; Lee & Buxton, 2013; Petrie & McGee, 2012).

Differentiated Professional Development to Meet Teachers' Needs

Knowledge of pedagogy deals with the manner that information is conveyed or taught. This encompasses an understanding of how learning takes place, what makes learning easy or difficult, and determining the right method for accomplishing the learning objective (Morewood et al., 2010; Shulman, 1986). Understanding the need for differentiation indicates an understanding of pedagogy.

A study conducted by Dixon, Yssl, McConnell, and Hardin (2014) investigated professional development, teacher efficacy, and differentiated instruction and concluded

that an increase in the number of professional development hours in differentiated instruction positively correlated with teacher self-efficacy. Examined in this study were teacher self-efficacy beliefs that included persistence, resilience, a willingness to learn new instructional strategies, and goal settings. According to Dixon et al.'s study, differentiated instruction requires a high level of flexible adaptation in order to meet student needs. This concept could also be applied to teacher professional development given the diverse learning styles teachers possess.

Other researchers also concluded that professional development works best when differentiated according to teacher needs (Frank, Zhao, Penuel, Ellefson, & Porter, 2011; Petrie & McGee, 2012). Frank et al. (2011) studied teacher experiences that transformed their knowledge related to the implementation of innovations and deduced that differentiation of professional development was the most effective way to reach all teachers who are accountable for implementing change. In their study, Frank et al. surveyed teachers in 25 different schools who had introduced a technological innovation into the curriculum. It was found that experienced teachers implemented new innovations more effortlessly when given time to collaborate with peers, where less experienced teachers needed time to experiment or "fiddle" (p. 150) with the program first, and new teachers required more direct instruction and guidance on how to implement the change.

Analysis of the data also revealed that newer teachers reported minimal positive effects of collaboration in implementing change, while teachers with moderate levels of teaching experience showed slightly more positive effects of collaboration (Frank et al., 2011). This analysis indicated that only veteran teachers showed a positive impact from

all three types of training, which included direct instruction, time to experiment, and time to collaborate, with the greatest impact resulting from collaboration. Frank et al. (2011) concluded that knowledge diffusion follows a predictable trajectory that is influenced by the number of years a teacher has been in service. In order to maximize implementation by all teachers, Frank et al. recommended that professional development designs include differentiated instruction.

Gabriel, Peiria, Day, and Allington's (2011) qualitative study found that professional development programs that demonstrated how to observe and evaluate students were of value to teachers. These types trainings addressed every-day or frequent occurrences and presented information that was relevant and applicable. Gabriel et al. explained that colleagues share a common vernacular or language within a specific context that can make their collaborations more meaningful and informative. Gabriel et al. posited that even though new classroom ideas and methods of instruction can be gleaned from books, the internet, and workshops, the importance of mentor or peer supportive interchanges of ideas, concepts, and lessons was viewed as more valuable. According to Smith and Lynch (2014), the use of mentoring in professional development is a valuable option that contributes to the professional capital of both the mentor and the mentee. Petrie and McGee (2012) found that just as teachers are required to differentiate instruction for their students, learning differences with a group of teachers should also be accounted for.

Professional Development and System Reform

Quality professional development has been determined to be a significant factor in teacher acceptance of educational reforms (Frank et al., 2011; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; White, Polly, & Audette, 2012). In a quasiexperimental study conducted by Johnson, Fargo, and Kahle (2010), 12 middle school science teachers in the United States investigated the importance of professional development in regard to its impact on a systemic reform program of teacher change and student learning. Johnson et al. used a control group to demonstrate that students who were instructed by science teachers who received initial training and ongoing support in implementing the new curriculum through participation in a professional learning community scored higher on state science assessments. Johnson et al. also conducted classroom observations of teachers who participated in enhanced professional development for the new science curriculum. The initial training consisted of two full days in the summer, with monthly follow-up sessions during the rest of the year. The PLC group was found to be a beneficial component of the professional development received by these teachers because it provided a means for social and personal growth as well as support for implementing the science lesson plans. This research supported the idea that effective professional development is critical to successful school reform.

A multiple-case study examined three middle school science teachers' responses to professional development for implementing the Next Generation Science Standards, a recent reform of the science standards. Allen and Penuel (2015) found that the prior and practical knowledge teachers possess determined how and what they learn from

professional development. Using sense making theory as a framework, Allen and Penuel determined that teachers often have to resolve the message conflicts received from administration, curriculum instructional practices presented in professional development, and the needs of the students. Interviews of key personnel at a North Carolina elementary school on the implementation of a new academic intervention model reported that classroom implementation of the intervention was an overall success due to quality professional development and supportive leadership reported by the teachers (White et al., 2012). When implementing programs, curriculum reforms, or the latest in instructional practices, attention should be given to teachers' accumulated knowledge and experiences in supportive environments to aid successful implementation (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Johnson et al., 2010; Morewood et al., 2010; White et al., 2012).

The professional development received by teachers is an important factor contributing to the ongoing success in the classroom (Archibald et al., 2011; Potolea & Toma, 2015). According to Jaquith, Mindich, and Wei (2010), schools that have clear plans and guidelines for teacher professional development show the strongest national test scores for K-12 students. Effective professional development is more than disseminating content knowledge; it communicates a shared vision of the school's mission and goals, affords teachers with opportunities for practicing skills, and cultivates a culture of collaboration (Eargle, 2013; Lee & Buxton, 2013). Dixon et al. (2014) concluded that quality professional development results in higher teacher self-efficacy beliefs, and Mizell (2010) found that higher teacher self-efficacy occurs in relation to strong, effective leadership.

Having high-quality, focused professional development has been recognized as a characteristic of high-performing schools (Fullan, 2007). Ford, Van Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson and Schween (2015) conducted a study with constructs relating professional development and teacher self-efficacy. The Ford et al. study reported the experiences of 37 elementary teachers from five Louisiana districts. Qualitative semistructured interviews were used to study teachers' experiences with the new high-stakes teacher evaluation system and the implementation of Common Core State Standards. Ford et al. used self-determination theory with its three basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness for intrinsic motivation as a framework.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to provide background to frame this study that sought to interpret Southern California 3rd through 5th grades teachers' experiences with professional development at their school or in their district. The review outlined the concept of professional capital and the construct of knowledge growth in teaching as the conceptual framework for this study as well as reviewed literature on aspects of professional development and teacher beliefs. Synthesis of the literature supports the inclusion of teachers' input and experiences, consideration of teachers' needs as learners, and a more proactive view of teachers' beliefs when designing professional development programs and activities. There is a gap in the literature concerning teachers' interpretations of their experiences with professional development. By exploring teachers' experiences with professional development at their school or in their district, I sought to fill a portion of the literature gap by analyzing Southern

California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of their experiences with professional development at their school or in their district. Knowledge in the discipline will likely be extended because the information presented in this study can be used to assist those responsible for designing professional development for teachers to do so in more effective ways.

In Chapter 3 I address the study design and rational for selecting a basic qualitative study. I specify the study population, sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The methodology described in Chapter 3 is consistent with that of qualitative studies which seek to interpret participant experiences.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Effective professional development is responsive to teachers' needs and leads to positive change in classroom teaching practices that meet the learning needs of students (Gulamhussein, 2013; Mizell, 2010). Little to no acknowledgment or consideration of teacher knowledge, experiences, or diversity of skills is taken into account when designing and delivering professional development (Petrie & McGee, 2012). There is a lack of responsiveness to the learning needs of teachers (Mizell, 2010) and a lack of active teacher involvement in the planning and designing of their professional development (Smylie, 2014). Teachers should be actively involved in the planning and designing of professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Postholm, 2012; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school site and in their school district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and designing future professional development at their school or in their district. The phenomenon of interest was teachers' experience with professional development at their school site or within their school district.

This chapter will provide a description and rationale for using the basic qualitative study method to interpret teachers' experiences. I will explain the research design and rationale. This chapter contains an explanation for using qualitative rather than quantitative methods of inquiry and a description of the basic qualitative study method

with an explanation of why the basic qualitative method was appropriate for this study. I also provide the research questions, participant selection descriptions, the role of the researcher in the context of the study, the justification of the instruments for collecting data, and the plan for data collection. In the data analysis plan, I explain the process of interpreting and analyzing data. Finally, this chapter concludes with an assessment of issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions and subquestions for this study were

RQ1: How do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers define professional development?

RQ2: What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school or in their district?

SQ1: What instructional strategies learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

SQ2: What curricular guidelines learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

RQ3: How have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and designing of professional development training at their school or in their district?

RQ4: What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in planning and designing professional development training at their school or in their district?

The central phenomenon of interest was teachers' experiences with professional development at their school or in their district. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital and Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching was used to analyze teachers' responses about their planning and designing experiences in professional development.

The goal of this study was to understand and explore teachers' interpretations of their current and desired levels of participation in planning and designing professional development within their schools and the school district. Qualitative interviewing accomplishes this goal. According to Gubrium and Holstein (2002), qualitative interviewing is based on conversations where the researcher engages in asking questions and listening to interviewees' responses with the main purpose of acquiring participants' experiences as opposed to discovering facts. This method of research was chosen to allow teachers to articulate their experiences.

Although remaining rigorous in its application, basic qualitative studies offer flexibility not commonly found in the rigid boundaries of traditional research methods (Kahlke, 2014). It is because of the flexibility and potential of basic studies to draw upon strengths of established methodologies that Merriam (2009) supported this approach as a stand-alone method of study. Researchers using this approach have the opportunity to customize or develop a research design tailored to their epistemological position and

particular research questions (Kahlke, 2014) that can result in descriptions or interpretations collected via interviews that can, through analysis, depict the experiences of study participants.

A quantitative approach is used to observe and measure numerical data for the purpose of statistical data quantification (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative approach was selected because qualitative researchers study real-life situations; make adaptations as situations and understandings change; and provide deeper and richer understandings of complex phenomena, experiences, and individual voices (Patton, 2002). In contrast to a quantitative approach, a qualitative scholar seeks to ascertain the experiences of the participants as opposed to testing variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) or accumulating numerical data. Understanding and exploring teachers' experiences cannot be measured numerically.

An interview-based study design allowed the participants to express their experiences through conversation. A basic qualitative study was decided upon because I was interested in how teachers interpreted their professional development experiences and the meanings they attributed to those experiences. Percy, Koster, and Koster (2015) posited that a basic qualitative approach is appropriate when thoughtful descriptions of people's experiences are the desired outcome. Merriam (2009) suggested that basic qualitative study designs are a good choice for researchers interested in people's interpretations of their experiences, construction of their worlds, and the meanings attributed to their experiences. Using data collected through interviews allowed teachers'

voices and experiences to surface so that rich descriptions of their experiences could be conveyed.

Other study approaches were considered but not selected. According to Merriam (2009), "a phenomenological approach is well suited for studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences" (p. 26). A phenomenological study provides a description of the essence or underlying structure of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). A phenomenological approach was not chosen because I was seeking more descriptive data about the participants' professional development experiences rather than in-depth analysis of how they experience themselves as teachers. Scholars use case study designs to describe cases within limited structures over a defined or bounded period of time common to all participants, and it involves multiple sources of data, observations, interviews, and document analysis (Creswell, 1998). I did not choose the case study approach because the study was not bound to a particular population or cultural group, I would not be collecting multiple sources of data, and I would not be making observations. Qualitative interviews were deemed best suited for the goal of this study.

Grounded theory was not selected because the goal of this study was not to generate a theory based on the analysis of participants' experiences. Grounded theory studies often entail many interviews. I wished to interview each participant once with follow-up interviews and member checking as needed. An ethnographic approach that explores and describes participant language, beliefs, and behaviors from a cultural point view (Creswell, 2007) was not selected because the intent of this study was not to present findings from a cultural perspective. Ethnographic studies center on interviews and field

observations over extended periods of time. Through in-depth interviews I intended to collect data that would reveal the experiences of the participants. To this end, the basic qualitative approach was selected and deemed most appropriate for the purpose of this study.

Role of the Researcher

As the exclusive investigator, I was the only one who had direct interactions with all of the participants; I gathered information, transcribed the interviews, and interpreted the data. The participants in this study were Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers who worked at three different campuses within a 5-mile radius of each other. I did not work at any of the sites. No conflicts of interest, supervisory issues, or power differentials had ever existed. My potential researcher bias came from working in the district, having taught and 4th and 5th grades for the majority of my career, and that I may have attended professional development trainings with the participants; this bias was addressed through member checking and other means that are defined in the trustworthiness section.

Methodology

The following section contains information pertaining to the participant selection and plans for data collection and analysis.

Participant Selection Criteria

The population for this study consisted of approximately 36 teachers in Grades 3 through 5 who worked at three elementary schools within a 5-mile radius of one another. The three schools were located in one of the Southern California school districts that

encompassed both rural and suburban regions and served pre-K through 12th grade student populations that exceed 18,000 students. The districts were generally characterized as high-poverty districts with high poverty schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), high-poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75% of the students are eligible for the Free and Reduced Priced Lunch Program. The Hispanic student populations in these districts ranged from 70% to 89%.

These three schools serviced similar student populations, and the staffs of the three schools were often geographically grouped together for district professional development trainings. The participants in this study worked in high-poverty schools. The average Hispanic student population is 76%, and the Free and Reduced Lunch percentage exceeds 75% in each school. The teachers at each of the three schools were fully credentialed, and each school was distinguished as a Title 1 Academic Achievement School. According to the California Department of Education (2016), schools that received this honor were recognized as being successful in narrowing the achievement gap between low-performing and high-performing students. The number of participants was determined by a saturation point when interview responses became redundant. According to Charmaz (2006), the sample size of a qualitative study is predicated upon the objectives and nature of a study.

Purposive sampling was used for this study. Purposive sampling, a form of purposeful sampling, is the selection of participants based on common characteristics and the objective of the study (Givens, 2008). Patton (2002) posited that purposeful sampling

of information-rich sources is used so that the greatest amount can be learned about an issue. Participants must have been full-time teachers; have a minimum of 5 years teaching experience; and have attended district-directed professional development throughout the school year as opposed to professional development attained from voluntary teacher funded professional development, college courses, or having attended a conference. In the event that a sufficient number of teachers with 5 years teaching experience did not respond, teachers with a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience would be invited to participate as a first contingency. A second contingency was to invite teachers from other elementary grade levels. These contingencies improved the feasibility of the study in acquiring a sufficient number of participants.

Because qualitative scholars seek to understand the perspective of participants and shapes meaning from their experiences, "it is important to select a study sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). It is also important that the participants who volunteer for this study have first-hand experiences (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, I planned to interview 10 to 12 3rd through 5th grade teachers because students in these grade levels take the state test. Twelve participants would represent about one-third of the available sample. Fusch and Ness (2015) posited, "one should choose a sample size that has the best opportunity for the researcher to reach data saturation" (p. 1,409). According to Baker and Edwards (2012), it is difficult to specify the number of qualitative interviews needed during the proposal stage. Interviews were completed until a saturation point when responses become redundant with the beginning assumption of 10 to 12 participants.

Patton (2002) advised the selecting of a sample size based on the reasonableness of describing a phenomenon with a selected number of participants. The number of participants related to the concept of saturation. According to Mason (2010), saturation is reached when data collected from qualitative interviews becomes repetitive and redundant. Given that saturation may be difficult to prove, the goal of qualitative research is to make meaning of experiences rather than provide generalized statements; thus, the number of participants should reflect various viewpoints and experiences and should be based on the scope of the study (Mason, 2010).

Upon acquiring Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (#02-21-17-0027476) and the local school district permission by receipt of the letter to the district requesting consent, prospective participants received an invitation and consent letter. Teachers who met the selection criteria and volunteered to be a part of the study were selected as participants. Interviews proceeded until the interview data and continuous comparison process suggested that saturation had occurred. According to Hatch (2002), use of small homogenous groups with shared characteristics is useful for attaining in-depth information.

The teachers who offered to participate received a consent form detailing the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, the methods of data collection, the anticipated amount of time needed, and assurances of confidentiality of any and all identifying information and ethical protection. The consent form also included information about member checking and how participants could review any material related to the study.

Instrumentation

Data for this study were gathered primarily by interview. The protocol outlining the procedures for the interview is found in Appendix A. I used open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B) to collect data in response to the research questions. The interview questions were vetted by seven members of the teachers' union executive board as a form of peer review. With leadership training and the benefit of a combined 200-plus years of teaching experience, members of the executive board had extensive experience in using data from teachers to make determinations and informed decisions. Enlisting their help added validity to the goal that the interview questions garnered the information needed to address the research questions. The executive board members did not work at the three sites from which the participants were selected. A run through of the interview questions was conducted with a teacher from another district who matched the selection criteria, in anticipation that I could develop more valid interview questions as a result.

I collected data in the form of audio recorded interviews and my notes taken during the interviews. The notes included non-verbal cues and body language observed during the interview. Each interview took place at a time and in a location convenient to the participating teacher. Each interview was digitally recorded for accuracy and later transcribed. Although I had anticipated an interview length of 60 to 90 minutes, the actual range of time was between 35 to 60 minutes.

Using open-ended questions, I led the interview with the intent of capturing teachers' experiences, thoughts, interpretations, and perceptions. According to Yin

(2011) and Creswell and Piano-Clark (2007), attaining qualitative data via interviews is appropriate for qualitative studies. Member checking allowed the participants to review the transcripts and to comment on my interpretations of their responses. Four follow-up interviews were scheduled as needed to provide clarification after I began analyzing the original data, had additional questions, or if the interviewee desired to talk more about something in the interview after reviewing the emailed transcript. This allowed for corrections or clarifications to be made.

Data Analysis Plan

Using constant comparison, analysis of the data for this study took place as it was collected. Merriam (2009) posited that data analysis commences after the first interview and is continuous throughout the study. According to Hatch (2002) and Creswell et al. (2007), analyzing data as it is collected is beneficial because it can keep response information fresh in the mind of the researcher. Constant comparison is a form of inductive analysis that can be used in qualitative studies (Percy, Kostere, & Koster, 2015). Member checking and secondary interviews occurred during the data collection process as needed for clarification and in response to emerging or follow-up questions. As interviews took place, analysis of responses determined common words, phrases, or sentences for open coding. Open coding identifies reoccurring words for the labeling and defining of concepts that emerge from the data (Khandkar, 2009). Axial coding of the data took place to further synthesize and cluster the information obtained from the interviews. Axial coding consists of identifying relationships among the concepts, categories, or themes that emerged during the open coding (Given, 2008).

As interviews occurred, I transcribed the recorded responses using Google Docs software. Google Docs and similar computer software applications allow digital recordings to be downloaded; and the use of a voice-to-text feature produces a transcription of the recording. Engaging in continuous coding, data obtained were entered into a Microsoft Word table used to organize and code the data. I originally planned to use NVivo 11 software to code and organize the data, but the use of a chart in Microsoft Word proved sufficient. Hilal and Alabri (2013) posited that advantages for using NVivo or similar computer based software for data analysis include the proposition that computer aided analysis is more thorough, methodical, and frees the researcher from manual tasks allowing the researcher to then concentrate on the data. Disadvantages to using computer software could include the cost of the software and the learning curve and lack of aptitude associated with learning and using a new software program. Another disadvantage of using computer software is a possible reduction in engagement with the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I established the credibility of this study through the use of member checking. As I transcribed interview data, participants received a copy of the transcription via email for review and clarification. Use of member checking provided a means to ensure the study was ethically conducted and the findings trustworthy, valid, and reliable. I used member checking when specific questions arose that required additional information.

I reinforced the dependability of this study by using reflexivity, maintaining an audit trail, and member checking. I kept a research journal describing my own

experiences and biases that may have influenced my interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009). I engaged in self-monitoring to ensure that alternate explanations were considered. I also created an audit trail to provide a detailed account of the research process and how I arrived at conclusions about the data. In addition, during the interviews, I was very careful to refrain from adding my personal comments and saved those thoughts for the journal.

I addressed transferability by providing thick descriptions of this study's procedures, context, participants, and their experiences in enough detail that could permit others in similar situations to arrive at similar conclusions. I used a researcher's journal to reflect upon my own experiences with involvement in professional development and its influence on my teaching expertise in efforts to remain objective.

Confirmability is related to a qualitative study's objectivity. For this study, I addressed confirmability through use of reflexivity, which Merriam (2009) described as engaging in self-reflection for the purpose of identifying factors that may influence the researcher's interpretation of the data. I used a researcher's journal to reflect upon my own experiences with involvement in professional development and its influence on my teaching expertise.

Ethical Procedures

Upon acquiring approval (#02-21-17-0027476) from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study, I contacted the district superintendent and requested consent to conduct my study. Upon receiving consent, I contacted potential participants at each school by email inviting their participation. As willingness was

indicated, participants received a consent form detailing the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, the methods of data collection requested, the anticipated amount of time needed, the choice of an interview location convenient to them, and assurances of confidentiality of any and all identifying information, and ethical protection. The consent form also included information about member checking and how participants could review any material related to the study.

I was solely responsible for each phase of this study ensuring confidentiality and maintaining the anonymity of the participants. I explained the purpose of the study and answered any questions potential participants had. Once collected, the data were securely locked in a file cabinet in my home. Microsoft Word documents containing the transcript responses were password protected. I personally transcribed the data in my home where all identifying information was kept confidential in a locked file cabinet. I used pseudonyms for all participant information to ensure confidentiality. Fictitious names were used to present the data in Chapter 4. Information will be retained for 5 years and then destroyed.

Summary

In this chapter I provided an explanation of the decision to use a basic qualitative study as the best research method for describing Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with professional development training at their school or in their district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and

designing future professional development at their school or in their district. I explained the reasons for selecting this methodology as the most appropriate for addressing the problem and research questions. I described each component of the research design for this study, the anticipated participants, setting of the research, data collection instruments, and participant selection. I outlined the data analysis using inductive steps for analyzing data, presented procedures for ensuring the highest ethical standards, and provided criteria for trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with: professional development training at their school or in their district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and designing future professional development at their school or in their district. It is important to understand elementary teachers' experiences with professional development so that the quality of their professional growth and development can be improved and viewed with greater importance in the learning environments in which they work. Research in this area can assist those responsible for planning and designing professional development for teachers with information needed for establishing and fostering successful professional development for teachers. Chapter 4 begins by reviewing the research questions, descriptions of the interview settings and participant demographics, the data collection and data analysis processes, the evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of this qualitative study.

The research questions and subquestions for this study were

RQ1: How do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers define professional development?

RQ2: What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school or in their district?

SQ1: What instructional strategies learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

SQ2: What curricular guidelines learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

RQ3: How have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and designing of professional development training at their school or in their district?

RQ4: What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in planning and designing professional development training at their school or in their district?

Setting

The interviews for this study took place in a location and at a time convenient to each of the participating teachers. Seven teachers chose their classrooms, and one teacher chose the union office. The interviews took place after work hours and did not interfere with the teachers' duties. The classroom doors as well as the union office door were closed to maintain the privacy of the interview and reason for visiting. We engaged in light conversation about how they were doing, their day, how their year was going, and their classes as an ice breaker before the interviews began. Each teacher appeared to be at ease, comfortable, and excited about participating. Nothing surfaced from the ice breaker conversations to indicate pressure or tension that could possibly influence the teachers'

responses to the interview questions. In the data collection section of this chapter I describe the setting for each interview as a means to further characterize the interviewee and the tone of the data collection process.

Participants

The participants for this study were 3rd through 5th grade teachers who worked at three elementary schools within a 5-mile radius of one another. The three schools were located in a Southern California school district that encompassed both rural and suburban regions and serves pre-K through 12th grade student populations that exceed 18,000 students. The participants in this study worked in high-poverty schools. All of the participants were full time teachers, with a minimum of 7 years teaching experience, and who had attended district-directed professional development throughout the school year. I describe the work experience of each of the participants, calling them by a pseudonym.

Claudette had taught fourth grade and fourth/fifth combo classes with 17 years of teaching experience in one district. She taught general education, students designated as gifted and talented, and special education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports.

Daphne was a fifth-grade teacher, had more than 20 years of teaching experience, and had recently changed grade levels. Like Claudette, she taught general education, students designated as gifted and talented, and special education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports.

Ertha was a third-grade teacher with 8 years of teaching experience in this district. She taught general education, students designated as gifted and talented, and special

education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports. Ertha held additional stipend positions at her school site with various job duties and participated in other committees.

Gladys taught fourth and fifth grades and had 15 years of teaching experience in the district. She taught general education and special education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports.

Josephine taught fourth and fifth grades and had more than 19 years of teaching experience in this district. She taught general education, students designated as gifted and talented, and special education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports.

Madge was a fourth-grade teacher with the majority of her 20-plus years in that grade level in the district. She taught general education, students designated as gifted and talented, and special education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports.

Phyllis was a fourth-grade teacher with 14 years of teaching experience in this district. She taught general education, students designated as gifted and talented, and special education students with individual education plans with designated resource specialist supports. Like Ertha, Phyllis held additional stipend positions at the school site with various job duties and participated in other committees.

Trudy was a third-grade teacher with 20 years of teaching experience in the district and had recently changed levels to teach students designated as gifted and talented. She taught general education and special education students with individual

education plans with designated resource specialist supports. Trudy also participated in other committees at her school site.

Data Collection

Upon IRB approval (#02-21-17-0027476), data collection proceeded as planned. I used the current seniority list that is e-mailed to all employees in conjunction with the individual schools' websites to identify potential participants and their grade-level assignments. I sent 12 e-mails to teachers explaining the purpose of the study and inviting their participation. Four teachers declined the invitation, and eight agreed to participate. Of the eight who agreed, two offered to enlist the help of other teachers if needed (which did not turn out to be necessary). As teachers consented to participate, I scheduled interviews. It was necessary to reschedule two interviews because two teachers had something come up. Claudette's original interview had to be rescheduled because she had to attend to a personal matter. Josephine's original interview had to be rescheduled because she had doubled booked her afternoon. Rescheduling the interviews did not present a problem. I let both Claudette and Josephine know that I appreciated their flexibility and desire to still participate.

I conducted face-to-face interviews with eight participants to obtain the data for this study. Saturation determined the number of participants for this study. According to Mason (2010), saturation is reached when data collected from qualitative interviews becomes repetitive and redundant. Using constant comparison, I began to see common sentiments arise by the seventh interview. The eighth interview was held to see if any

new data would surface. The data obtained from this last interview was in line with the previous interviews.

With participant permission, the interviews were recorded with an Olympus VN-722PC digital voice recorder. This model has a low-noise microphone, a voice filter, comes with a portable USB cable, and holds 4 gigabytes of data. The audio recording playbacks were clear and transferring the digital voice files to the computer was easy.

All but one of the interviews were between 45 minutes to 60 minutes, with the one lasting 30 minutes. This short interview was the only interview that took place in a room other than the teachers' classrooms. I took notes during each interview to record participants' body language and facial expressions in addition to noting the environment or atmosphere at the time of the interviews.

Claudette's Interview

For Claudette's interview, we found each other in the hallway after school. She was on her way back from the front office where she had been making copies for the next day's lessons. We greeted each other and engaged in small talk as we walked to her classroom for the scheduled interview. Once inside, Claudette asked where would be a good place to interview and I responded wherever was most comfortable for her. She selected to sit at her desk because her chair was more comfortable than the students' chairs. I sat at the table to the right of Claudette's desk. I pushed the table close to her desk and positioned the digital recorder a little closer to her. The classroom was cool and well lit, and the door was closed. Claudette had pictures of her kids and the new puppy on

the wall behind her desk. Because she was experimenting with flexible seating, Claudette had circular tables with chairs as opposed to traditional desks in her room.

After about 15 minutes into our interview, the custodian came in. I paused the recorder and used that brief disruption to ask Claudette how she liked the flexible seating. She said it was okay and that the most challenging part was not having a place for students to keep their belongings and books. Once the custodian was finished, I turned the recorder back on and the interview proceeded. Claudette appeared to provide genuine and honest answers to the interview questions. The interview lasted about 45 minutes. Once we were done, Claudette collected her things, I collected mine, and we walked out to the parking lot together. I thanked her and we said our goodbyes.

Daphne's Interview

The interview with Daphne also took place after school in her classroom. When I arrived, school had already been out for an hour and half so the front office doors and the gates were locked. I knocked on the front office door, and the health technician was kind enough to let me in. I told her I was there to see Daphne and that she was expecting me. As I walked out of the back of the office, I ran into the principal. We greeted each other warmly and shook hands. I informed him that I was there to see Daphne, and he pointed me in the right direction.

Daphne was in one of the portables installed on several campuses to accommodate the growing numbers of students. As I walked up her ramp, Daphne opened and met me at the door. I had not seen Daphne in a couple of years. We greeted each other with a hug and engaged in small talk. I remember my days in a portable. We

discussed the benefits of being in a portable as opposed to regular classroom with the primary benefit being able to control the thermostat. Daphne's classroom had traditional seating and was dimly lit because half the lights were turned off (the way Daphne liked it at the end of the day), and the temperature was comfortable. Daphne sat at her desk, and I sat in a student desk right in front of Daphne's desk for the interview. I positioned the digital recorder close to Daphne. Daphne, who was teaching a new grade level, was very open about her experiences and frustrations with the professional development or the lack there of she had received. Daphne relayed and described her experiences in great detail, and I found myself empathizing with her frustrations but I only nodded my head in acknowledgment and refrained from commenting either positively or negatively. I focused on listening and taking notes about Daphne's nonverbal clues and gestures and what came to my mind. As she described being in a new grade level and not receiving any support, her frustration was palpable and her struggle was real. Being someone who likes to help others, it was hard for me not to offer suggestions but this was not the appropriate setting for that. Daphne apologized a couple of times for rambling and asked if she had answered the question(s) at hand. I assured her that she was answering my questions and that she was not rambling. I listened attentively, and Daphne seemed to appreciate that. Our interview lasted about 60 minutes. As we packed up and walked out, we chatted about our families and Daphne's new car. I thanked her, let her know that I would be sending a transcript of the interview, and we said our goodbyes. We did agree to touch base at a later time on a couple of strategies that might work with her students.

Ertha's Interview

Ertha's interview also took place after school in her classroom. It was sprinkling when I arrived at her school. Her principal and a supervision aide were out in front of the school waiting for the last few parents to pick up the remaining students. Mrs. Reese and I warmly greeted each other. We chatted about her kids and how well her son was doing in school. She then asked why I was there and I told her I was there to see Ertha and asked what room she was in. Mrs. Reese gave me directions to Ertha's classroom. I thanked her and proceeded to Ertha's room.

Ertha was in another teacher's room chatting but watched for me to walk by. She met me outside and we walked to her room. Ertha's door is usually open because her daughter comes in and out of the classroom, but to avoid any interruptions, Ertha placed her daughter's backpack outside and closed the door. She explained that her daughter knew that meant mommy was busy and for her to go next door to Miss Baker's room. I did not ask Ertha to do this but thanked her for her thoughtfulness. To which she replied, "No problem at all. I just want to be able to focus and not be interrupted." For this interview, Ertha and I sat at a small kidney-shaped table used for pulling together small groups. The digital recorder was between us but closer to Ertha. Looking around Ertha's classroom, I could tell that she was very organized. She had that really neat graphic penmanship that some teachers have and everything was labeled. She had the cute coordinating and matching borders, desk name plates, posters, pencils, and other accessories. It was clear to see that Ertha invested quite a bit of time, effort, and money into her classroom. Ertha was very thoughtful, honest, and open in her responses to the

interview questions. Her descriptions of her professional development experiences were clear and vivid. Even when describing a negative aspect about district professional development, she worked to phrase it in a positive manner. Our interview lasted about 50 minutes. Ertha still had work to do before leaving for the day. I thanked her again and left. On my way out, I asked Ertha if she wanted the door left open or closed? "Open!" she said with a smile.

Gladys's Interview

Gladys was the only teacher who chose to interview in a location other than her classroom. The interview took place at the teachers' union office. Teachers can come by the office during afternoon office hours, use the resource room and get a snack. Gladys mentioned grabbing a snack when the interview was scheduled. We met after school hours at the union office and used one of the smaller offices for the interview. It was a warm afternoon and because the office had not been opened, the air conditioner had not been turned on yet. It was a little stuffy in the small office with the door closed, but the temperature soon chilled. Gladys and I sat opposite one another at the desk with the digital recorder positioned closer to Gladys Although I felt Gladys's answers were honest, they were short and to the point. I had to probe a bit more for descriptions. This was the shortest of the interviews. It lasted a little less than 30 minutes. I think using the office may have created a more formal atmosphere. I thanked Gladys for the interview, we hugged, said goodbye, and she did grab a snack on her way out. I later wondered how different the interview could have been had it taken place in a classroom.

Josephine's Interview

Josephine and I met after school hours by the library. We had briefly run into each other the year before. We hugged and greeted each other before taking the elevator to get to her second-story classroom. We chatted along the way about her husband and her four-legged child, Oscar, who still has the run of the house and is his "mommy's absolute joy". Once we walked in the classroom the motion-censored lights came on and I followed Josephine toward the front of her classroom to a small round table. The air conditioner was still on so the temperature of the room was cool and comfortable. As I set up for the interview, I noticed Josephine had a huge library of student books and asked was she able to incorporate much extra reading. She commented that due to the students' general lack of interest in reading and all the other things we had to teach that unfortunately she was not able to get much extra reading in. I agreed with her.

Ready for the interview, Josephine and I sat down, the digital recorder was positioned closer to Josephine, and we began. Josephine's responses were thoughtful, honest, and open. She was animated and communicated with lots of hand and arm gestures. During the interview, the air conditioner went off. The air conditioners are on timers and controlled at the district office so they shut off after school is out. Teachers are able to press a button and turn them back on. Josephine did not miss a beat, and continued answering the question at hand as she walked over and turned the unit back on. As she walked back to the small round table, Josephine picked up a couple of math squares that had fallen on the floor. Sidetracking a little, Josephine explained that manipulatives were used that day for the math lesson. This along with the math squares

on each student's desk was evidence that Josephine used manipulatives in her teaching. The interview continued without further interruption and lasted about 45 minutes. Josephine had additional work she wanted to do before leaving for the day, so I thanked her, packed up, and left.

Madge's Interview

Madge was the first teacher I interviewed. The interview took place after school in her classroom. Both the interior hallway door and the exterior door were closed. The room was cool and the lights were off. There was plenty of daylight streaming in from the exterior windows and the florescent light from the hallway lights through the interior windows. The students' desks were arranged in cooperative seating groups of five to six students. Small talk preceded the interview. Madge and I chatted about her children, the youngest who will be senior in high school, and the fact that time really does fly by. I got the impression that Madge really needed to talk, so there was no rush to get to the interview. I listened attentively and participated as the conversation continued until a natural break presented the opportunity to switch gears and begin the interview.

Madge and I sat across from one another at a rectangular table with the digital recorder positioned close to her. As we went through the questions, Madge being a thoughtful and deliberate person provided responses that were thoughtful and intentional. She often paused before responding. Not an awkward pause, but a reflective kind of pause. I perceived her responses as honest and genuine. It was during this interview that I had to rephrase a couple of questions so that the response could provide the information I sought, particularly the questions about teachers planning and designing their own

professional development. There were no interruptions during the interview. The interview lasted close to 60 minutes. Madge said that she was happy to help me out with an interview, but I also think it was good for her because she was able to voice some things that were on her mind. Madge had a couple of things to do before leaving for the day, so I thanked her, packed up, and left.

Phyllis's Interview

The setting for the interview with Phyllis was also her classroom. This interview took place after school hours as well. Phyllis's classroom was cool and well lit. We chatted briefly before the interview began. Phyllis did inform me that she would have to leave by 4:15pm because the person who usually picked up her son had called and was not able to pick him up today. It was just before 3pm. I let her know that the majority of the interviews had taken about 45 minutes, and also gave her the option to continue or reschedule. Phyllis chose to continue and offered to reschedule in the event that we did not finish. Phyllis sat at her desk, and I sat right across from her with the digital recorder positioned near her.

As the interview proceeded, Phyllis's answers were thoughtful and honest. I believed her responses to be trustworthy especially after she asked how blunt could she be in responding. I let her know that she could be as blunt as she wanted or needed to be. Phyllis then shared with me that she understood the importance of providing honest answers from having to do interviews for her masters' project. Phyllis appeared at ease answering the questions but paused reflectively when admitting that she felt her professional development learning needs as a teacher had never been fully met. Although

we both kept an eye on the clock, the pace of the interview moved along steadily. The questions and responses flowed naturally. They were not hurried or rushed. There were no interruptions, and we finished the interview in 50 minutes. I thanked Phyllis for her time. She expressed that she was happy to help and for me to feel free to contact her if any questions from transcribing came up. She also offered to recruit one or two more teachers for me if I needed additional participants. I let her know that I would be sending the transcript soon and thanked her again.

Trudy's Interview

I arrived at Trudy's school just as school was being dismissed. I waited for Trudy as she dismissed her last two students. We greeted each other warmly. As we walked to her classroom, she had to make a quick stop. I noticed that the architecture of this school was slightly different from the other campuses. Where the other campuses were more industrial like, the buildings on this campus resembled homes. Maybe it was the way the windows were framed, but I thought the characteristic interesting. The afternoon was cool and a little breezy.

At first both the exterior door and interior hall door of the classroom were open. A hall door or classroom doors on the other side of the pod must have been opened also because a nice breeze flowed through the classroom. I sat a round table in the middle of the room and waited for Trudy. Trudy's classroom was bright and had round tables and chairs instead of desks. When she came in, she closed both doors, grabbed her tea from her desk, and joined me at the table. We chatted briefly about how she was doing, her husband, and her grandson.

The digital recorder was positioned close to Trudy, and the interview began. Trudy was excited to share her professional development experiences. She reported some were good, and some were not so good. Trudy appeared to be at ease. Her responses seemed open, honest, and thoughtful. Having changed grade levels and designations, Trudy shared that she received very little training from the district in the area of teaching gifted and talented students. She was excited about the challenge but wished the district had provided training instead of her having to seek it on her own. The interview continued smoothly, there were no interruptions, and lasted about 50 minutes. As I was packing up, Trudy took out her phone to show me pictures of her grandson. We ohhed and ahhed, laughed, hugged, and said our goodbyes.

The final step in data collection was sending transcripts to each of the participants. Three teachers responded with minor corrections and two teachers provided additional information to better explain two of their original responses. In addition, it was also necessary for me to contact four participants with clarifying questions or to ask more details by e-mail or text. They provided the requested information in a timely manner.

Data Analysis

In the section on data analysis, I reviewed how I approached the analysis and the themes that emerged. In the findings section, I reviewed the findings in relationship to these themes in order of the research questions.

I used Google Docs to transcribe the interviews. As codes emerged, I used constant comparison as an analysis tool. I examined the responses to determine common words, phrases, or sentences for open coding. Open coding identifies reoccurring words

for the labeling and defining of concepts that emerge from the data (Khandkar, 2009). Axial coding of the data took place to further synthesize and clustering of the information obtained from the interviews into themes. Axial coding consists of identifying relationships among the concepts, categories, or themes that emerged during the open coding (Given, 2008). I replayed the recordings and reviewed the transcripts multiple times.

For constant comparison, I used tables for each research question with the headings: *participant's words/name, codes, theme(s),* and *research question (RQ) focus*. The tables allowed me to cluster common words, common phrases, and supporting statements used by the participants in the codes column. The codes were synthesized into themes. For example, in answer to the first research question, how do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary school teachers to define professional development? codes for this question were *remaining current*, *on-going*, and *learning the latest*. *Remaining current* was mentioned six times. The codes *on-going* and *learning the latest* were each mentioned four times. These codes lead to the themes of *continued learning* and *advancing knowledge*. Other examples of participants' words reflecting these themes included "life-long learner" (Trudy), "educate on best practices" (Phyllis), and "enhance personal growth" (Josephine). I explain codes and themes in detail as they pertain to the research questions.

Appendix C illustrates an example of the tables I used to categorize codes and identify the themes that addressed the research questions. I described each of them below

in relationship to the four research questions and will return to a full description of the findings in the Results section.

Table 1.

Research Questions and Emergent Themes

Research Question	Emergent Themes
Research Question 1. How do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers define professional development?	• Advancing knowledge • Self-reflection
Research Question 2. What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school or in their district?	• Overwhelming • Ineffective • Inadequate
Research Question 3. How have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and design of their professional development training at their school or in their district?	• Opportunity spurs involvement
Research Question 4. What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in contributing to the planning and design of professional development training at their school or in their district?	• Actively engage teachers • Worthwhile professional development.

Summary of Emergent Codes and Themes Related to RQ1

The first research question focused on teachers' definition of professional development in a general or big picture sense. Themes supporting the big picture sense of professional development were *continued learning* and *advancing knowledge*. The theme of advancing knowledge encompasses the ongoing and continual nature of learning that these life-long learners hope to experience. The codes clustered in the themes of

advancing knowledge and continued learning were *remaining current*, *learning the latest*, *ongoing*, *best practices*, and *connecting prior and new knowledge*.

The second part of the first research question focused on teachers' definition of professional development in a personal sense. *Self-reflection* emerged as theme for teachers' responses. The participants appeared to look inward and respond from a needs-based position. The codes that I clustered under this theme were *my needs*, *my weaknesses*, *personal growth*, *make me better,* and *improvement*. The results section contains a detailed explanation of the emergent codes and themes relevant to research question 1.

Summary of Emergent Codes and Themes Related to RQ2

The second research question concentrated on teachers' experiences with and descriptions of professional development at the site level or the district level. Based on the analysis of teachers' responses, the descriptive themes that emerged regarding the teachers' experiences with professional development were overwhelming, ineffective, and inadequate. I chose the word *overwhelming* as a theme to reflect what teachers described as getting too much at one time with no time to process, integrate, or evaluate what was presented. The theme *ineffective* reflects teachers' sentiments that the professional development they often received did not contribute to their becoming better teachers. The *inadequate* theme demonstrates the teachers' interpretation of professional development as being irrelevant since their learning needs were not met. The codes supporting the themes included *inundating*, *watered down*, *mandated*, *trendy*, *lacks*

continuity, and *lacks follow through*. The results section contains a detailed explanation of the emergent codes and themes relevant to research question 2.

Summary of Emergent Codes and Themes Related to RQ3

The focus of the third research question was teachers' current involvement in planning and designing professional development. A secondary focus was included to describe teachers' past involvement in planning and designing professional development. The theme for this question is *opportunity spurs involvement.* While only three teachers described current planning and design professional development experiences from the last school year, five of the eight teachers provided accounts of their professional development planning and design experiences. Codes that supported both themes were *choice*, *sharing of knowledge*, *flexibility*, and *empowerment*. The results section contains a detailed explanation of the emergent codes and themes relevant to research question 3.

Summary of Emergent Codes and Themes Related to RQ4

The fourth research question concentrated on teachers' ideas and desire to plan and design professional development activities. Two primary themes emerged from the teachers' responses to this research question. Those themes were *actively engage teachers* and *worthwhile professional development*. Actively engaging teachers encompassed their involvement at each stage of professional development planning, design, and engagement. It began with assessing teachers' needs, compiling an inventory of teachers' strengths, and using interactive instructional strategies. The theme worthwhile professional development encompassed the effective form and function of professional development. This included using expert delivery and engaging in

collaborative discussions before, during, and after the professional development session. The codes for these themes included *collaborative*, *engaging*, *hands-on*, *interactive*, *focused*, *needs based*, *feedback*, *useful,* and *relevant*. The results section contains a detailed explanation of the emergent codes and themes relevant to research question 4.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I established the credibility of this study in several ways including the use of member checking. As I transcribed the interviews, each participant received a copy of their interview transcript by e-mail. Three teachers responded with minor corrections and two teachers provided additional information to better explain two of their original responses. It was also necessary for me to contact four participants with clarifying questions or to ask for more details by e-mail or text which helped me add to the credibility of the data. Finally, the interview questions were developed from my analysis of related literature, from the related Morewood and Bean (2009) and Morewood et al. (2010) studies, and from testing the interview questions with similar professionals. Integrating interview questions that have been field tested or used in related studies added credibility to the data collection instrument and provided a valid basis for later comparison of results (Kelder, 2005).

Dependability

I reinforced the dependability of this study by using reflexivity, maintaining an audit trail, and member checking. I kept a research journal describing my own experiences and biases that may have influenced my interpretation of the data (Merriam,

2009). I engaged in self-monitoring to ensure that I considered alternate explanations. I also created an audit trail to provide a detailed account of the research process, and how I arrived at conclusions about the data. In addition, during the interviews, I was very careful to refrain from adding my personal comments and saved those thoughts for the journal.

As soon as possible after each interview, I reviewed the notes taken during the interview and recorded my thoughts and experiences about what was shared during the interview in a journal. For example, I empathized with Daphne's frustration of receiving no support. It was challenging to refrain from offering her suggestions, and I journaled about a time when I experienced the same frustration and what I could do later, at an appropriate time, to help Daphne. In another instance, when Josephine spoke about the 45 minutes of wasted time in professional development on the new laptops that the teachers did not have, I knew exactly what she meant because I too had sat through a similar session. I had to do my best to keep a straight face. I tend to be very facially expressive. People tell me my face can tell it all good or bad. As a researcher interviewing people face to face, I knew I had to be very aware of my facial expressions. I used notetaking during the interviews, journaling following the interviews, and discussions with a close friend who teaches in another district to voice my thoughts, ideas, and experiences. I also took advantage of member checking, and as the need arose I checked the intent of the data by contacting my participants.

Transferability

I addressed transferability by providing thick descriptions of this study's procedures, context, participants, and their experiences in sufficient detail that could assist others in duplicating the design, data collection, and analysis process in a variety of useful ways. For instance, my familiarity with most of the participants is evident in my descriptions of the interview sessions. This might have affected the data and results may be different if a researcher does not know any of the participants. I carefully selected participants who taught 3rd through 5th grade levels and while this may have increased the dependability of the findings, it may have decreased transferability to teachers' experiences at other grade levels facing different professional development and curricular challenges.

Confirmability

Confirmability is related to a qualitative study's objectivity where the findings are based on the participants' responses. I was diligent in accurately portraying the participants' responses as they intended. I contacted teachers when clarification was needed. For example, during the interview Ertha indicated that she learned to let the students work through certain problems on their own before intervening, from attending a professional development session. It was not clear to me whether this was from recent professional development within the last school year or from previous professional development. I contacted Ertha and found out that she did not learn this from professional development but as a result of watching her students work. She said she misspoke and apologized. This clarification made it necessary for me to recode this information. While

I addressed confirmability through use of this type of member checking, I also used reflexivity, which Merriam (2009) described as engaging in self-reflection for the purpose of identifying factors that may influence the researcher's interpretation of the data. I used a researcher's journal and notes to reflect upon my own experiences with involvement in professional development and its influence on my teaching expertise.

Results

I arranged the results in response to the four overarching and two sub research questions. The themes that emerged as a result of coding and clustering the data follow each question.

Research Question 1: Advancing Knowledge and Self Reflection

In order to better understand and set a context of how elementary teachers define professional development, I began the study seeking their interpretations of professional development first from a general or big picture perspective, then from a personal perspective. All but one of the teachers agreed that the purpose of professional development is to improve teaching practices by advancing teachers' knowledge while keeping teachers current with the latest research. I observed that in answering this question, the responses stretched between an ideal definition of the purpose of professional development as stated in the previous sentence and a definition of professional development as experienced in the district. Six teachers paused for a brief time before answering, and four asked for clarification about professional development in general or professional development in the district. If asked, I encouraged the participants to respond to either a general definition, district-related definition, or to both. Madge's

definition of professional development was different because she felt it was something done just to say it was done. Two themes emerged from analyzing and coding the data. The theme that emerged for the big picture perspective was that of *advancing knowledge*, and the emergent theme for the personal perspective was *self-reflection*. The codes for advancing knowledge were: continued learning, remaining current, on-going, learning the latest, and connecting prior and new knowledge. The codes supporting the theme self-reflection were: my needs, my weaknesses, personal growth, and improvement. My analysis of the data is supported by teachers' responses.

Advancing knowledge. Claudette's response was characteristic of the consensus among the eight teachers about the purpose of professional development.

> I think the purpose of the professional development is to further teachers' education in the classroom, refine their teaching strategies [and] teaching techniques, to hone in on some skills that can improve the quality of their teaching in the classroom. In summary, training on new skills, refining and honing existing skills. Just furthering your education. Put simply helping you become a better teacher.

Trudy spoke of professional development as encouraging life-long learning, while both Josephine and Ertha mentioned professional development as learning new things. Daphne commented that professional development puts teachers in touch with students' needs.

> The purpose of professional development, I would imagine is to keep us on the cutting edge; the idea that we are leading our children to the future. I mean we

> talk about 21st century technology and all that kind of stuff. I would think that it [professional development] is to be right there where our kids need to be.

Madge's response was different because it did not reflect on-going learning for teachers. After pausing, thinking, and speaking slowly, Madge expressed that professional development was something done just to say it had been done. Her response, "I think it's a way for them [admin, the district] to show that they've taught us something. They did it; they held professional development sessions for the teachers. There's always a push for what they want to teach us, but not for what we need to learn."

Self-reflection. In responding to professional development on a personal level, half of the participants stated that professional development to them personally matched their description of the purpose of professional development. Four of the eight teachers, after pausing and looking around thoughtfully, described a slightly different meaning of professional development when asked what it meant to them personally. Their responses were more of a reflective nature. Ertha replied, "It just means taking the time to better my craft, to learn new things, to see what I can do differently to keep my kids' attention or to teach things from a different perspective maybe even."

Trudy stated:

> I think for me personally, it's what I feel my weaknesses are as far as a teacher. Where I know I lack teaching skills, you know, that are weak. For instance, I just started teaching the gate class. So, currently I'm taking gate courses and I know that I need professional development with the icons and things like that. So, improving my own teaching, having my own personal needs.

Similar to Trudy, Madge replied:

> Professional development to me is the area that I choose to focus on during the year. It really has nothing to do with anybody else and where I see either strength or I see something that I have to tweak depending on the students and depending on where they are. And it varies.

Along the same vein as Madge and Trudy, Josephine responded:

> I think it's more important to go ahead and actually refresh your professional skills. Because sometimes we just get to the point that we forget about something and when we are introduced to something or just shown again, all of a sudden all this connection comes in. And we can always add another piece to this and then make this even better practice.

From analyzing teachers' definitions and descriptions of professional development in a big picture sense and on a personal level, this data indicates that teachers understand the form and function of professional development.

Research Question 2: Overwhelming, Ineffective, and Inadequate

What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development at their school or in the district? Teachers described school and district professional development experiences as being primarily overwhelming, ineffective, and inadequate. Teachers' responses were analyzed and coded into these three themes. Phrases reflecting the sentiment of "too much at one time" surfaced in each of the participants' responses. Understanding the need for honesty in her response, Phyllis asked, "How blunt can my responses be?" I encouraged her to be as

blunt and descriptive as she wanted. To which she replied, “That’s good, because the whole idea behind interviewing for a thesis or dissertation is to present honest information.” Her responses mirror those of the other participants, which were characterized by the following feelings: mandated, insufficient, lacking continuity, and missing meaning.

Overwhelming. Teachers felt the professional development they received was overwhelming. Daphne’s response provided a summary regarding the theme of *overwhelming*. “Generally, it’s too much. Most of the time it’s like taking a drink from a fire hydrant. Here let me have someone from the publisher come in, and in a couple of hours, ram this stuff down your throat.” Madge provided a similar response by saying, “In the last year, I have spent several days of my time from start to finish being bombarded with information. They just needed to spew it out, and I had to sit there for it.” Phyllis mentioned “things just being thrown at us [teachers]” and Josephine described it as being “presented with 10,000 skills at once to see what sticks” and went on further to say, “in the classroom, we [teachers] present skills and concepts one at a time, professional development should do the same”.

Ineffective. All but one of the participants described the professional development they received in the last year as being primarily ineffective, a waste of time, and of little value. Josephine recounted a training session on the new laptops where only the instructor had the new laptop. Josephine’s description of the experience:

> We had professional development on the new laptops without actually having the laptop in our hands. That was quite interesting. It was a group setting. We were in

> one the teacher tech's classrooms and she had the device. She showed us the device, then she showed us a PowerPoint, and she told us about different functions. It was a visual aid without us having the opportunity to actually practice because there were no laptops for us. That was quite interesting 45 minutes – a 45-minute training. "Any questions?" [the instructor asked.] – [Umm no (laughter)].

Several participants expressed that they try to be positive and hopeful that they will take something away from professional development training. Ertha felt most of the trainings are just pulled together, but she tries to find one or two useful things to take away from it. Others shared Ertha's sentiment of professional development being hastily pulled together. Oftentimes the training comes off as unplanned and irrelevant. This could be due to the fact that teachers' needs are not surveyed. Gladys expressed the trainings as being an afterthought, but that she found 30% of the information presented useful. Madge stated, "I could probably tell you three key things that I've taken from all of the things that we've done this year, and that's a shame." Daphne responded, "I really try to glean something from each session, but that is a challenging feat at times."

Mandated. Teachers attend school and district professional development because it is mandatory. When responding to the question, why do you attend professional development at your school site or in your district, seven of the eight teachers chuckled, smiled, and looked at me with a you-know-why kind of look. Each then proceeded to answer. The responses were short, to the point and included: "we have to", "it's mandated", "we don't have a choice". Trudy responded reflectively stating the reason she

attends, “I do want to stay current with my teaching. I don't want to be behind. I want my students to have the best opportunities to learn, and through that comes my professional development, and the skills that I'm bringing to the classroom.” This was then followed by, “Usually it's mandated. Oftentimes we have no choice really.” Josephine’s account of the new laptop training without the laptops is an example of professional development being mandated and demonstrates Madge’s sentiment of being bombarded with information that they [admin] needed to spew out. The new laptop training without the laptops also exemplifies Ertha’s comment regarding things being pulled together and the lack of planning.

Insufficient. For the most part, teachers felt their learning needs as teachers were at best only partially met as a result of attending district professional development. When asked to describe whether their learning needs as a teacher were or were not met, the teachers responded, “not at all”, “occasionally”, and “sometimes yes and sometimes no”. Daphne and Trudy had changed grade assignments with different designations and received little to no district professional development. Trudy enrolled in a class to learn more about how to meet the needs and particular challenges of her students, and Daphne spent 3 to 6 hours each day in addition to the teaching day combing through the available curricula to determine what best to use with her students. Daphne recounted her experience:

> So, I was moved to a new grade level because I was perceived as being good in the new level. There was no place to sit down and say ‘okay what’s the curriculum, how does this work? What is the language arts program’? It was kind

> of like, ‘well it’s right there on the computer’. When I asked what folder, I was told ‘C drive’ or whatever. I go in there and there is stuff from 20 years ago, so I’m going through trying to figure out where’s the current curriculum? How do I go through this? There’s never any time where you sit down with someone who knows it like the back of their hand. I spent countless hours with an intensive, new-to-me program that I received no training on, but had to use. The curriculum indicated a teaching time of 3 to 3 1/2 hours to do the lesson effectively. I had less than 2 hours. There was no guidance on what to combine, reduce, cut out, or what the assessments were. So, I was learning on the go. My learning needs as a teacher are definitely not being met.

Trudy also spoke on her experience changing grade levels.

> I think that the trainings are too few, and that they really are just like a watered-down version of what we should be actually learning. So, I guess that's what I'll say, that's how I feel. With that being said, my learning needs as a teacher are only partially met.

Ertha identified the lack of teachers’ choice as a possible reason why district profession development falls short in meeting teachers’ learning needs.

> Well the fact that we don't really get to choose what we're being taught is part of the need not being met. But we have had some follow-up on the new reading curriculum. We’ve had a lot of math stuff which I feel has really been helpful. But I think if we could sort of take a poll of what we need then maybe the district could provide choices. Then you have this [or] you have that (choice)

> like at CUE (conference). When you go to CUE, there are always classes to choose from. What do *you* want to take? So, I think if I could pick, instead of being told it'd be a lot more beneficial for me.

Along the lines of choice as mentioned by Ertha, Claudette mentioned the idea of learning needs versus learning wants when it comes to district professional development meeting teachers' learning needs,

> Sometimes the needs are met because we're given training on new curriculum or new instructional strategies, new ideas and new technology. Oftentimes they're not met because what we need and what we want are two different things. Sometimes we want more training on one area; it could be instructional strategies or it could be more in-depth training in the new curriculum, or in technology. You're [teachers] given the small quick training and nothing in depth and those things are never revisited again. So, I don't feel like we're always listened to and that our learning needs are not always met to the best of the ability.

Phyllis not only spoke about her learning needs as teacher for the last school year, but also reflected further back.

> In my honest heart of hearts, I cannot tell you that my learning needs have ever been fully met. I feel like most professional development is very shy of meeting the needs of what teachers need to be successful with the strategies that they're trying to teach you. Learning something for a couple hours and then expecting people to put it into best practices is asinine. I would say on many, many, many occasions, while the good ideas are there, it's not implemented in a way that gives teachers the follow-up that they need to

make sure that strategies are working the way that they (admin) want them to work. That's a really hard question to answer.

Inadequate. When asked to identify instructional strategies learned from district professional development in the last school year or to describe how their learning needs as teachers were met, teachers provided pensive responses that gave a glimpse into their view of the usefulness of the professional development attended. The teachers indicated that the professional development received lacked a degree of meaningfulness and often fell short in terms of usefulness or applicability. Madge described the typical professional development training session with a new curriculum as "teachers sitting with their teacher's editions, a stack of sticky notes, and the trainer saying 'X can be found on page 5' or 'Y is on page 14'." In her opinion, this is not an example of the quality learning that teachers need.

Lacking continuity. Four teachers describe the professional development received from the district or at their sites as lacking continuity and being unstable. In describing professional development topics, Claudette expressed the trendy or fad-like nature by stating, "It's basically whatever bandwagon or whatever new hot topic is out there." Phyllis likened the constant changes in professional development directives to "throwing the baby out with the bathwater," stating, "new programs are undertaken before they have been vetted. Each year it's something new with no apparent regard for what has been shown to work. It's the newest, latest, greatest – so let's do it." Daphne described the selection of the new math curriculum in which the district had selected math curriculum from two different publishers, allowed teachers to review both, and asked which one was

preferred. Although the teachers selected curriculum B, the district chose curriculum A. Then when it came time for professional development training on curriculum A, a teacher who had piloted or selected curriculum A could not be found. No teacher claimed to have selected it, but teachers were trained on it anyway. Daphne then expressed in disbelief, "Wow, what was that? Unbelievable." Ertha believed that administration's fascination with shiny and new should not be considered the cure-all, like the computerized reading program, and passed on to teachers and students without thoughtful consideration. Ertha stated,

> I think that admin or whoever picks these things should really have to sit through, use it, and should really not be sold on it until they do. They're sold on it, but they're not the ones who have to use it and try to make it work in the classroom.

Phyllis also questioned the reliability of the information teachers receive in professional development. Teachers are told what they are learning is research based, the newest, and the latest, but her question was, "Where is the proof that what teachers receive is best practices?"

Missing meaning. When describing instructional strategies learned from attending professional development in the last school year teachers thought were beneficial, only one of the eight teachers identified an instructional strategy she found helpful. Of the remaining seven, two immediately laughed out loud. Others paused and contemplated thoughtfully and said, "Umm, let me think" or "Hmm, I really need to think about that". As teachers genuinely thought about the question nonverbal gestures such as a hand on the chin, gazing around the room, and lightly drumming fingers on the desk

were observed. I nodded in acknowledgment of their responses and gave them further time and space to think, before words such as "I can't think of any" were spoken. I assured them that their responses were okay but also opened the door that if they should think of something to please share it.

Although only one teacher was able to identify a strategy learned from attending professional development in the last school year, the other seven teachers were able to identify and vividly describe an instructional strategy learned from professional development, but expressed the learning took place years ago. Gladys, the one teacher able to identify recent learning stated, "It was at the last ELD (English Language Development) [professional development], there were some GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) strategies presented and because I have a new comer, they told me, 'I should use the sentence strips with him. Do lots of modeling, use realia and hand gestures'."

Teachers described school and district professional development experiences as being primarily overwhelming, ineffective, and inadequate. Their words and experiences indicate a lack of teacher involvement in planning, designing, and executing of professional development activities. Their shared experiences can also be taken as an indicator that teachers' voices are not being heard or even solicited. These conditions can leave teachers feeling disempowered.

Research Question 3: Opportunity Spurs Involvement

The following section provides accounts of teachers' experiences with being involved with planning and designing professional development. These experiences

address the third research question for this study, how have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and designing of professional development at their school site or in the district? The theme *opportunity spurs involvement* resulted from the fact that these teachers were given and took advantage of opportunities to play the leading role in planning and designing professional development for their colleagues. Codes from descriptions of current involvement as well as descriptions of past involvement that support this theme were *choice*, *sharing of knowledge*, *flexibility*, *opportunity*, and *empowerment*. This section begins with teachers sharing their experiences from the last school year followed by descriptions of professional development planning and designing that took place 4 to 5 years ago.

Of my eight participants, three, Ertha, Phyllis, and Trudy were involved in the planning and design of professional development at their school sites in the last school year, as well as being recipients of other trainings. Of the remaining five, Gladys described her involvement as more modest - completing a site needs survey. Josephine, Claudette, Madge, and Daphne were not involved in planning and designing professional development in the last school year. However, Josephine and Claudette both nostalgically spoke of a time years back when she had planned, designed, and trained other teachers. Ertha, Phyllis, and Trudy, the three teachers who participated in the planning and design of professional development at their sites had been on committees or were asked to take the lead on developing a training session for the teaching staff. Ertha and Phyllis held other site stipend positions at their schools. A stipend position is an additional job with associated duties a teacher can have and is compensated for.

Ertha developed training related to the use of technology. She described the experience:

> So, I've had to make a lot of tutorials, screencasts, guides for everything, like how to do the gradebook, how to do the report cards, and how to find errors. I have found that I personally am a visual learner, but when I'm presenting something, I'll do visual, I'll do paper, I'll do video. You understand people are different learners so I try to present everything in different ways so it's helpful to everybody. It's a lot of work. But in the end, it does save you time. If you do a thorough enough presentation it saves you time in the end because everything is right there. There's a link, it's all there. Paper, PowerPoint and whatever you need.

Ertha stated with an emphatic, "Yes!", that her involvement with the planning and design of the professional development training was high. Because of her efforts, Ertha felt that she was able to facilitate a growth in teachers' knowledge on the subject.

> I think the grade book wasn't so intimidating. I really broke it down to where I wanted them to be able to fully do it on their own without me having to go in and end up doing it for them. Because when you do it for someone you're not helping. You're not helping them and they're not helping themselves. So, I really laid it out to where they had full control. So, I think doing that helped.

In response to her planning, designing, and providing tools for teachers to use, Ertha felt that she had empowered teachers with knowledge to help students learn.

> So, I think I did. Maybe not so much with grade books, but I was told that just through what I did like they felt in full control. They knew what they were

> doing. They were empowered that way. But I've also done some tutorials, some screencasts and add-ons that students can use. Teachers have shown them to their students. Now the students are in control and can do simple things like create a Google Doc or adding background. Simple little things and it makes the children feel like 'this is my presentation now'. It's not just the background that my teacher picked. There's a template, now I can do this. So I think it just gives the kids more control, and when they feel more like it's theirs, they reproduce that work. They're more interested in it. There is more ownership.

Phyllis's account of her involvement in the planning and designing of professional development for teachers was like Ertha's in regards to developing training for the grade book, but she was also involved in planning and designing professional development training on the new writing curriculum which included a coaching aspect. She stated, "I spent 2 days in training where I was coached and learned to coach others on how to use the materials for the writing curriculum in the classroom. Then I actually taught and coached other teachers on how to use it properly." When asked about the components or materials used, Phyllis described the training she received.

> We actually had somebody from the company there coaching us and teaching us. We were able to interact with them and say, "Okay, well what do you do if this happens or what do you do if that happens?" It was great because we got that back and forth from a professional who has been using this material for a long time, which I really liked. I was able to ask questions, and I didn't just feel like I was just remotely sitting there in the room. We had all of the curriculum materials at

> our fingertips. So, we were able to use whatever we needed. When we had questions or when we wanted to pull material for a particular grade level, we were able to do that kind of stuff.

Phyllis used this experience as a model for the training and coaching on the writing curriculum and the grade book training she later provided to her colleagues. Phyllis also used a PowerPoint presentation as an additional teaching tool for the grade book training.

> I actually full-on created a PowerPoint with clips and pictures and all that stuff that would teach teachers because everyone, well almost everyone is visual. I needed that visual tool to be there to be able to go back and be repetitious for teachers showing this is how you're going to do this.

Phyllis expressed mixed feelings when asked if she felt that teachers were equipped to be successful having attended the training session she planned and designed. Her honest reflection

> Yes and no. Yes, I feel like we had good information to give. No, because there's never enough time to give them all the tools that they (admin) need to give them. The time that they (admin) set aside to disseminate this information always feels like you're in a rush. Okay well let me pick at least three things to tell you because I can't get to the other hundred things that I think you should know. It's always rushing for time. There is never enough time allotted to give teachers what they need.

Referring to the three main points in her presentation and whether Phyllis thought it was enough to empower teachers toward success, Phyllis responded.

> No, I feel like teachers need modeling. Teachers need to see it in action. Teachers need to not just be given something but to be shown how it works, and that's never something that we're actually given. It's always just let me just tell you about this, and never show you how to actually do it in classroom.

Trudy was asked to take the lead on putting something together to train the staff on the new student success program that was being implemented. Trudy's experience:

> I created the training where I had to discuss: what we were doing as far as our site plan, go over what we were doing with our binders or organizational tools, what we're going to do as a site, our goals, and just how we were going to implement the student success program at our site with our students. I brought in a binder. I modeled exactly what needed to be in the binder. I told the teachers that they needed to meet as a grade level and discuss what they wanted for their grade level to have in the binder because each grade level is different. I talked about the program's strategies. I also presented a PowerPoint and walked them through several strategies and used a binder example along with handouts.

Trudy felt the training session was successful because it was the first one she had done and because the student success program was new to everyone. "There was nothing to base it off of, and next year can only be better". Trudy also believed that the training session she put together empowered teachers with knowledge of how students learn. Her response.

> Yes, I think it did because we talked about note taking and how across the grade levels if we are consistent, students will know the expectancies of how to set up notes in their binders, whether it's kindergarten through 5th grade. So even having their name, date, title of assignments, and just how to stay organized which is the whole point of the student success program being successful.

From their experiences with planning and designing professional development for teachers, Ertha, Phyllis, and Trudy collectively expressed a sense of fulfillment in being able to share relevant knowledge with other teachers. Each of their planning sessions addressed a need and was considered by them to be useful. Review of their comments also indicated a sense of empowerment in that each was given the opportunity and allowed the flexibility to present professional development in a manner they thought best. Something Trudy commented "does not happen often".

Although the involvement in planning and designing professional development they shared occurred years back, Josephine and Claudette smiled warmly as they recalled their experiences. Both of these women seemed to get a bit excited as they recounted their experiences. Their eyes brightened and the tone of their voices changed. Josephine commented on how fun it was because although it was after school hours, it involved a choice to share and format the session in an interactive manner. Claudette expressed that the experience was memorable because she enjoyed the process, it held value for her, and she felt it had value for the teachers she was training. Claudette's training session provided a hands-on experience and provided a safe place for teachers to ask questions. Four years ago Josephine had planned, designed, and organized an optional after school

math professional development session that actively involved the demonstration and use of manipulatives. She described the experience as a

> simple lesson that gave teachers the opportunity to use manipulatives and experience learning from a student's perspective. The lesson started with an objective that had to be met, but as they worked through the lesson, teachers switched back and forth between student and teacher roles. This allowed them to discuss with me and among themselves different ways to use the lesson with manipulatives in their classrooms.

Josephine utilized manipulatives, technology, notes, and handouts. She felt the lesson was successful in improving teachers' knowledge because "the lesson was interactive on different levels, hands-on, and addressed a specific skill". Josephine felt the teachers were equipped with instructional strategies because "they could repeat what they had learned by the end of the trainings session and take it to their classrooms the next day". Josephine summarized the training for teachers as them being able to say, "I've seen it, I've done it, and now I'm going to go ahead and teach it." What made this experience memorable for Josephine was the aspect of choice. Teaching with manipulatives was something she found useful and wanted to share with other interested teachers.

Claudette's experience with planning and designing a professional development session was similar to Josephine's with regards to choice and sharing. Claudette provided the backdrop of a much different time in the district 6 years ago.

> It was many years ago when people with specialties were asked to highlight them, and asked if they wanted to share some of their specialties. We had professional development days where you could choose some of the different topics or sessions you wanted to go to. Whether at the time it was making PowerPoints or learning better instructional strategies, reading comprehension strategies, teaching your kids the times tables. The topics were not mandated nor were they done just by the teachers on special assignment or by teaching coaches who were out of the classroom. By highlighting people's specialties, the trainings were designed by teachers for teachers. You were getting the training by another teacher currently in the classroom and you got to see how they were using these things in the classroom.

Claudette had become adept with utilizing PowerPoint as a teaching tool in the classroom and had the desire and opportunity to share this with other teachers. Claudette reflected, “that was probably the only time that I had ever had a say as a teacher” in terms of professional development. Claudette’s training took place in the computer lab. Each teacher had access to a desktop, handouts with step-by-step instructions, and access to student work samples. The LCD projector was also used. The lesson guided teachers in making and using simple and complex PowerPoint presentations as a means of engaging students.

Claudette felt that her training session was successful at improving teachers’ knowledge of using PowerPoint presentations as a teaching tool and at equipping teachers with instructional strategies.

> I think it helped because they saw how a teacher that was currently in the classroom used it, how easily it could be used it, that it could be simple or complex. I think it gave them a safe place where they weren't having to feel like 'I don't know anything', 'I feel like I should know more' or 'I don't want to ask questions'. They could ask questions and not feel intimidated by a presenter, publisher trying to sell something, or someone that was really not specialized in classroom use. As a fellow teacher, I could answer their questions because it was something that I was actually using in the classroom.

Claudette also believed that as a result of her efforts in planning and designing the professional development, teachers' knowledge of how students learn was increased.

> I think they saw that you have to have the hands on. It can't just be the paper pencil. It can't be just a handout; it can't be just the teacher teaching and the students listening. That the real learning begins with the hands-on portion of the lesson. The teachers also took away with them a partial product that they could continue to build upon. And because they had already started utilizing those tools, doing the work, and not just listening or reading a handout, I think that experience probably encouraged them to have their students do some of the same things.

Similar to Ertha's, Phyllis's, and Trudy's experiences with planning and designing professional development for teachers, Claudette and Josephine also expressed a sense of fulfillment in being able to share relevant knowledge with other teachers. Their planning sessions addressed particular needs and were considered useful by them and the teachers who attended after school hours. Fourteen teachers attended Claudette's after

school training session, and Josephine remembered about a dozen teachers choosing to attend her after school session. Both Claudette and Josephine spoke of flexibility, freedom of choice, and empowerment on their parts as trainers and on the part of the attending teachers. With their training sessions being held after school hours the empowerment experienced by Claudette and Josephine could have been greater than that experienced by Ertha, Phyllis, and Trudy because they were not constrained by any district or school site parameters such as the limited amount of time allotted for professional development in the course of a work day or work week.

Research Question 4: Actively Engage Teachers in Worthwhile Professional Development

What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in planning and designing professional development training at their school or in their district? This section presents teachers' ideas of what they would do if given the opportunity to plan and design professional development in the future. The two primary themes that emerged from teachers' responses were *actively engage teachers* and *worthwhile professional development*. Phrases like "talk to the teachers first", "make the experience truly interactive", and have "experts guide the learning" were heard frequently. Supporting codes included *assess needs*, *allow choice*, *differentiation*, *allow for mastery*, *leave prepared*, and *leave equipped*.

When Phyllis first began answering how she would plan and design professional development activities for teachers, her response began to mirror her description of district professional development, so I had to rephrase the question. My objective was to

find out what teachers would do if they could. The new question and setup was *if given the opportunity to plan and design professional development any way you wanted, it can look the way you want and sound the way you want. You can use or not use whatever materials you want. The choice is yours.* What would *you* do? Three of the eight teachers responded, "Oh! What would *I* do?" The three teachers who had been recently involved in planning and designing professional development found it easier to answer the question.

Actively engage teachers. The teachers told me that actively engaging teachers encompasses their involvement at each stage of professional development planning, design, engagement, and execution. It begins with assessing teachers' needs, compiling an inventory of teachers' strengths, and utilizing interactive instructional strategies. In response to the revised question about how individual teachers would plan their own professional development session, six of the eight teachers mentioned beginning the planning and design of their professional development with "polling teachers' needs and wants", "asking teachers", "finding out what questions or concerns teachers had", "starting a conversation", or "surveying". The remaining two teachers jumped right in to describing the nuts and bolts of what and how they would run their professional development sessions.

There is a perceived lack of interest held by teachers on the part of the district regarding what teachers need. Teachers are seldom if ever asked, "What do you need to become a better teacher?" or "How can the district or administration better support you as a teacher?" This could explain why teachers feel their learning needs are not fully if ever

met. Good teachers, as mentioned by Claudette and Daphne, are aware of their students' needs. Equipped with this knowledge and the final goal, teachers are able to plan and design lessons to take their students from point A to point B. Reflecting on good teaching, Josephine mentioned that a teacher knows his or her students and uses that knowledge to help them become better. Josephine stated, "We [teachers] don't throw random concepts and lessons at them [students]". The failure of those who plan and design professional development for teachers without knowledge of teachers' experiences, needs, questions, concerns, or wants is not good teaching. Madge commented that if "we [teachers] taught our classes the way we are taught in most professional development sessions, administrators would write us up for being ineffective".

Teachers expressed a strong belief in knowing as much as possible about what teachers know when planning professional development. Beginning the planning, designing, and organizing of professional development by assessing teachers' training needs and wants, Madge believed would "increase teachers' focus and buy in". The focus and buy in would potentially increase because the session would be viewed as more valuable. Gladys felt that by polling teachers "she could assess their needs and customize a training session to meet those needs". Ertha also mentioned this "as a way to plan for varied learning styles and modalities". "Teachers are expected to differentiate in order to meet the needs of their students, why aren't professional development activities differentiated?" Trudy reflected. This could also prove to be an important way to empower teachers' because their voices would be heard.

There seemed to be a collective agreement that by involving teachers in the various stages of professional development, the likelihood of their learning transferring to their classrooms could increase. This involvement, they reported, would best come in the form of meaningful discussion, interaction, and reflection or feedback. Discussion and interaction were used throughout their descriptions of their professional development training sessions; discussion in the beginning in the form of assessing teacher learning needs and wants planning and designing the sessions, discussion and interaction during the training sessions where teachers talked with one another and the instructor, questioning, brainstorming etc., and discussion at the end of the training sessions as a means of reflecting on what was learned and a verbalization to use what was learned. Finally, they desired discussion as a form of follow-up for later debriefing.

Six of the eight teachers said they would ask or poll teachers' desired learning needs or wants to begin the discussion. Two examples of the type of discussion hoped for during the training were when Claudette commented that part of her training session would include a discussion period where, "teachers discussed ideas for using the information presented in their classroom or with certain students"; and Madge stated she would "create an atmosphere where teachers can bounce ideas off each other and talk about things that work and things that don't". Discussion was also desired to be used at the end of the training session. According to Phyllis the discussion would involve teachers "honestly evaluating the usefulness of the training session as well as identifying a current problem in their classroom and how what was learned could be used to address it". For follow-up discussion, Daphne suggested, "follow-up meetings or an electronic

forum where the subject is revisited and teachers report their experiences good and bad so that adjustments can be made and learning can continue".

All eight teachers seemed to believe that discussion before, during, at the end, and after a training session actively involves and engages learners in the process and that through this active engagement along with the methods and materials, teachers would be more likely to leave their training sessions with relevant knowledge and ready to try what was presented in the training session. Claudette felt that by "having open conversations teachers feel that they're taking knowledge a way with them". Similarly, Josephine expressed, "I think discussion is another way to internalize learning."

In reflecting on what professional development could be, teachers spoke of elements they would like to see in future professional development. Phyllis felt that teachers should be asked about their needs, that those organizing the professional development training should spend more time going deeper on a few focused objectives as opposed to scratching the surface on multiple concepts. Josephine's final thoughts were similar. She said that she would like to suggest to those who do professional development planning for teachers "they need to decide on one or two skills at a time, then later revisit them". Ertha expressed that those planning professional development should "talk to teachers first and give them time to use what was taught". Ertha also mentioned, "We [teachers] know what we are doing and what our students need and that maybe we shouldn't be mandated to use programs that we have not been fully trained on at the expense of student learning."

Daphne and Claudette expressed similar sentiments. Claudette would like to see professional development that is truly "by teachers for teachers". In her opinion, this sort of training holds more weight because the teachers leading the training are currently in the classroom. Daphne would like to learn from "experts that have actually done it, are effective and successful in the classroom". She stated, "We need to hear from those that have figured out how to teach in such a way that students realize that the more they do for themselves, the more their future opens up."

Madge felt that those planning professional development "need to be mindful of the directions teachers are being pushed, and that training needs to be fully thought out". Trudy believed that more professional development was needed, but instead of watered down second-hand information, she felt that "all teachers should be partaking in first-hand learning and training experiences". Trudy spoke of how the phrase, "We're learning this along with you," was heard repeatedly at training sessions from those guiding the learning. This was indicative of a small handful receiving training 2 or 3 days of training and had to turn around and teach larger groups what they had learned in 2 or 3 hours.

Gladys was the one teacher who did not offer a suggestion, but reflecting on 4 years ago or so stated she did like how there was once a menu of professional development topics to choose from. Gladys described the time when teachers were given a list of different professional development sessions to choose from. There were at least two or three session choices for reading, writing, and math. Teachers could choose the sessions they wanted based on their need or interest. For example, a teacher could have

selected the session on vocabulary development as opposed to the session teaching cause and effect. She stated, “It was nice to have a choice.”

Worthwhile professional development. Teachers described worthwhile professional development as that which was relevant (Trudy), immediately useful (Madge), and prepared teachers for what they may encounter in the classroom (Josephine). Claudette and Trudy agreed that teachers should leave a worthwhile professional development session equipped and ready to re-enact what was learned in their classroom. Many similarities arose in the teachers’ descriptions of their ideal professional development sessions. Collectively, they described their sessions as relevant, worthwhile, meaningful, immediately applicable, focused, purposeful, interactive, and fun. These characteristics can be attributed to the threads of discussion, involvement, collaboration, and choice that ran through each of their descriptions.

After polling teachers, the next steps shared were establishing a learning objective, determining the best available means of accomplishing the learning objective to include delivery of instruction and materials to be used, then outlining the format and developing an organized agenda for the training session. The teachers’ descriptions of their professional development sessions reflected their collective thoughts of professional development being thought out and purposeful.

Finding the best possible person(s) to deliver instruction was important. Trudy said, “It would not be just me but a group of teachers.” Claudette, Daphne, Ertha, and Trudy spoke of “inviting teachers who were experts to deliver training instruction.” Claudette, Daphne, and Phyllis particularly mentioned, “It is important to see and learn

from other teachers who are currently in the classroom and not a salesperson from the publishing company." Gladys and Josephine shared the sentiment, "Learning from a colleague has more value than having to sit through presentations given by people who have been removed from the day to day challenges of teaching in the classroom or have never taught." Daphne questioned, "How relevant are the strategies presented by someone who has been out of the classroom for 5 years?" All eight teachers agreed that having current teacher-experts providing instruction during professional development was one way of increasing teachers' knowledge.

Another way of increasing teachers' knowledge was through the methods of instruction delivery used. Phyllis stated, "There's more than just sitting and listening lecture style. I find that teachers need and want to be active learners." The methods mentioned for teacher learning included collaboration, use of rotating centers, small groups, role playing, and the use of hands-on components. Ertha stated, "I would use everything, technology, books, audio, a lot of humor. Most of all I would create a comfortable learning environment so that teachers felt safe to ask question." Daphne agreed with Ertha especially on the point about using humor. Claudette and Madge also emphasized having a safe question-friendly learning environment for teachers where they can "bounce ideas off each other". All eight teachers agreed that depending on the subject and learning objective, as many of these methods and more should be employed to engage teachers' learning.

The materials they suggested they would use during professional development are closely related to type of instruction selected. The teachers' answers varied when

identifying the materials they would use in their training sessions, but most teachers agreed that whatever it took to help best reach the learning objective would be used. Josephine and Phyllis agreed that, “The materials don’t have to be fancy”. Madge, Ertha, and Daphne were in agreement that, “Technology has its place, but it’s not the end-all-be-all”. The list of materials used included everything from pencil, paper, scissors, sticky-notes, tape, and construction paper to easels, presentations, manipulatives, handouts, laptops, Chromebooks, and manipulatives of all sorts. Phyllis stated, “I would not use something just for the sake of using it.” Josephine and Claudette summed it up, “I would use whatever is appropriate and available as long as it supports the final learning objective.”

Claudette, Gladys, and Josephine were on a similar page with another method of worthwhile professional development potentially increasing the likelihood of teachers leaving their training sessions with new knowledge and ready to repeat the learning in their own classrooms. Gladys stated, “Teachers would leave with a kit.” The kit would contain everything needed for the teacher to repeat the lesson learned during the training and everything in the kit would be explained and modeled. Claudette explained, “Because seeing a poster is okay, but left to our own devices, teachers just don’t have time to make or gather the components”. Josephine also mentioned the teachers being able to take a set of the manipulatives used during training with them, “but monetary constraints often make it impossible”. Claudette, Gladys, and Josephine would also agree that having the kit, having practiced using the components of the kit in the training session, and taking it

with them, teachers would be much more likely to use what was learned in their classrooms.

Worthwhile professional development should also empower teachers with information about how students learn. Ertha, Claudette, and Phyllis felt that by using a variety of teaching strategies within their training sessions would model differentiation that teachers could emulate. Ertha's response summarizes their thoughts. "I would think and hope that the way I teach and conduct the training with the different varieties or different approaches for the same topic would provide a model for them to follow and take back with them." Claudette, in the process of modeling within her training said, "It's important that lessons for students are engaging, repetitive, divided into small chunks, include lots of practice, and provide hands-on learning." Phyllis stated, "Student learning must be modeled to show students how-to in a step-by-step fashion."

The responses provided by Gladys, Trudy, and Josephine are related to the concept of role playing. Gladys identified role playing as something not seen in district professional development and felt it was important to incorporate. Gladys believed, "By having teachers role play the behaviors of students with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or behaviors of ELL (English Language Learner) students, teachers could work together to develop and practice solutions for engaging students with more challenging behaviors." Trudy also indicated an element of role playing student behaviors. In her version, "The experts leading the training would mimic student actions during the lesson as a model of what student learning should look like." Josephine's idea of role playing centered around the teacher

stepping into the role of the student. Josephine's professional development session would take teachers through a discovery exercise that she believed "would allow teachers to experience learning similar to the way students do. Doing so would give teachers a first-hand glimpse of how students may encounter things."

Daphne provided a different response. She would strive to increase teacher knowledge of how students learn by "providing some of the latest research on how the student brain learns and processes decisions". She would include studies on the frontal lobe development and decision making in youth. Daphne expressed that if we [educators] had a better understanding of how the student mind processes information and makes decisions, many of the learning expectations placed on children and the ways things are done in schools would change. Madge's take was similar to Daphne's. Madge spoke of including training on growth mindset. She felt that, "Studying and developing a growth mindset in students would change the way we look at education." Madge conveyed that in her opinion, "If students were taught to view experiences and the mistakes made from a growth perspective, they might develop more positive attitudes that could carry them into their futures."

In expressing what they would do if given the opportunity to plan and design professional development, teachers identified actively engaging teachers in each stage of the professional development session from preplanning to post feedback; and providing worthwhile professional development experiences that are meaningful, relevant, and immediately useful could improve the quality of professional development learning

teachers receive, their perceptions of professional development, and potentially make teaching in general more effective.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with: professional development training at their school or in their district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and designing future professional development at their school or in their district.

The analysis of this research identified four key findings, one each in relation to the four research questions. The first key finding was that the participants' definitions of professional development were consistent with those found in the literature. A second key finding was that teachers described the professional development they received at their school sites or from the district as ineffective, insufficient, and inadequate in terms of usefulness, applicability, and relevance. The teachers were in agreement that their learning needs were seldom met. The third key finding was that teacher involvement in the planning and design of professional development was limited. Three of the eight teachers interviewed had participated in planning and designing professional development sessions in the last school year. The final key finding was that teachers desire to be actively involved in planning and designing meaningful and worthwhile professional development activities.

In this section I provided an explanation of the participant demographics, data collection, and analysis for this study as well as presented the findings in relation to the four research questions addressed by the four areas listed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' experiences with professional development training at their school or in their district, current participation in planning and designing professional development at their school or in their district, and their interest in planning and designing future professional development at their school or in their district. Eight teachers responded to semistructured open-ended questions regarding their professional development experiences. I used inductive analysis of the interview responses to identify emergent themes. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital and Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching provided the theoretical framework for understanding teachers' experiences with professional development for this study.

Summary of Key Findings

The research questions and subquestions for this study were

RQ1: How do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade teachers define professional development?

RQ2: What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school or in their district?

SQ1: What instructional strategies learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

SQ2: What curricular guidelines learned from professional development training do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers perceive as beneficial?

RQ3: How have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and design of their professional development training at their school or in their district?

RQ4: What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in contributing to the planning and design of professional development training at their school or in their district?

In the analysis of this research, I identified four key findings, one in relation to each of the four research questions. The first key finding was that the participants' definitions of professional development were consistent with those found in the literature. A second key finding was that teachers described the professional development they received at their school sites or from the district as ineffective, insufficient, and inadequate in terms of usefulness, applicability, and relevance. The teachers agreed that their learning needs were seldom met. The third key finding was that teacher involvement in the planning and designing of professional development was limited. Three of the eight teachers interviewed had participated in planning and designing professional development sessions in the last school year. The final key finding was that teachers desire to be actively involved in planning and designing meaningful and worthwhile professional development activities.

Interpretation of Findings

The conceptual framework for this study included Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital and Shulman's (1986) construct of knowledge growth in teaching. Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital and Shulman's construct of knowledge growth in teaching intersect on the concept of knowledge. Professional capital represents accumulated and existing knowledge where the construct of knowledge growth serves to describe the acquisition of knowledge. I found that knowledge and experience or professional capital possessed by teachers is largely unused and unsupported. I also found that teachers' growth or acquisition of knowledge from current professional development practices was lacking.

Professional Capital

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), professional capital is the sum of teachers' human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. This approach exhibits a shift from the quality of the individual teacher to the quality of the teaching profession as whole. Too often individual teachers are viewed as effective or successful. Hargreaves and Fullan argued that the quality of teaching among collectives of teachers has to improve in order for the quality of instruction on a broader sense and student achievement to improve. Teachers' professional capital, their collective experiences, knowledge, and talents, are an untapped resource when it comes to the planning and designing of professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The acknowledgment and use of teachers' professional capital, according to Hargreaves and Fullan, is needed to "transform the entire teaching profession" (p. 16). Using teachers'

professional capital in planning and designing professional development, could according to Hargreaves and Fullan, meet their key charge that all teachers should be "teaching like pros," resulting in the improvement of the individual, the raising of team performance levels, and the increasing of quality across the profession (p. 23).

The participants in my study described their experiences with professional development as having little to no impact on their teaching practices. Teachers were typically left out of the professional development planning and designing equation. Their professional capital, knowledge, experiences, and talents were seldom taken in to consideration. To illustrate the gap between Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) goals for teachers and the findings of this study, one teacher said,

> We [teachers] are not asked about our needs, experiences, talents, or knowledge. There is no inventory or survey of our strengths. We are told what to learn. Professional development is mandated and the fact that we don't get to choose what we're being taught is part of our learning needs not being met and what we may have to offer being ignored.

I found that teachers want to be involved in matters that pertain to them. Teachers want to share their knowledge and experiences; many do informally outside the realm of professional development. Finding district professional development inadequate, another teacher stated that she did not feel that teachers were listened to; as a result, teachers' needs on a larger scale, as well as their learning needs, were not met. Another teacher expressed, "Professional development is very shy of meeting teacher needs because communication is one-sided."

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) claimed that teachers are eager to be involved and want to use their talents, experiences, and knowledge or their professional capital in planning and designing professional development was demonstrated in the following occurrence. Three teachers who either held additional site-stipend positions or were on a committee planned and designed professional development sessions for teachers in the last school year. They expressed that having the opportunity to plan and design professional development for their colleagues was an empowering experience not only for themselves, but for their colleagues because they were able to share their knowledge and experiences in a manner that would help others. Teachers who planned and designed professional development in past years also indicated a sense of empowerment in doing so even though it was not part of the work day or work week because they shared their knowledge and experiences with other teachers. The teachers in both these instances used their professional capital to enhance the professional capital of others.

The active involvement of teachers in professional development planning, design, or execution is not a common practice (Gravani, 2012; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Smylie, 2014; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). Effective professional development is responsive to teachers' needs and causes positive change in classroom teaching practices that meet the learning needs of students (Gulamhussein, 2013; Mizell, 2010). The elementary teachers in this study described their overall professional development experiences as overwhelming, inadequate, and insufficient. Elementary teachers felt disempowered and that they had no voice because they were seldom consulted about their learning needs,

their need to be involved was not addressed, or their knowledge and experiences used to better teaching practices.

Knowledge Growth in Teaching

The second part of the conceptual framework for this study drew on Shulman's (1986) three prerequisite areas of content knowledge needed for teaching children: subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Participating teachers did not describe their professional development experiences as being valuable or contributing to the quality of their teaching practices; instead, they described the district professional development received as overwhelming, ineffective, and inadequate. I heard evidence of these in all three realms addressed by Shulman – subject matter, pedagogy, and curriculum. In relation to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital, the lack of consideration for teachers' knowledge, experiences, needs, questions, or concerns in the planning and designing of the professional development received could also have resulted in the perception of district professional development falling short in increasing teachers' knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, and curriculum.

Subject matter. According to Shulman (1986), most teachers begin with some expertise in the content they teach. Elementary teachers hold multiple subject credentials requiring them to demonstrate levels of proficiency across various subjects by passing a test. Given that teachers' learning needs are not solicited when professional development is planned, their depth of knowledge in various subjects is not addressed by the professional development they receive. For example, with the implementation of the Next

Generation Science Standards, one teacher commented that “teachers were told to use the new standards for developing their lesson plans, but there was no professional development provided for developing teachers’ depth of knowledge for say magnetism or electricity.” Another teacher stated, “I could probably tell you three key things that I've taken from all of the things that we've done this year, and that's a shame.”

Pedagogy. Teachers must know what makes learning easy or difficult and how to make subject matter comprehensible for students (Shulman, 1986). Teachers need to understand how to teach so that students will learn. A teacher must have a large inventory of alternate forms of representing and presenting information to reach a wide range of student learning styles. Only one of eight teachers were able to identify a helpful instructional strategy she learned from having attended professional development in the last school year. Another teacher expressed that she found 30% of the information presented useful.

Curriculum. Shulman (1986) believed that teachers should have a thorough understanding of the materials provided for instruction. The teachers in this study perceived curriculum training as ineffective. The training they typically received on curriculum did not increase their knowledge to a point of thorough understanding. The teachers shared that when the new reading curriculum was adopted, the one-time professional development session consisted of a grade level of teachers, approximately 30, in the gym with their new teachers’ editions, sticky notes, and someone saying “X is found on page 5, Y can be found on page 21.” One teacher commented, “I could have

learned more had I been given the time read through the TE [teacher's edition] in my classroom."

I heard no evidence of what Shulman (1986) called for regarding professional development fostering a deep understanding or familiarity of the curricular materials provided to teachers for instructing students. Teachers reported that they are hopeful and try to remain positive that they will learn something useful from attending professional development, but this was not always the case. One teacher felt that most of the trainings were just haphazardly pulled together, but she tries to find one or two useful things to take away from it. Another teacher stated, "I really try to glean something from each session, but that is a challenging feat at times." The district professional development received by teachers did not positively impact teachers' acquisition of curricular knowledge.

Awareness of self-knowledge. A component that could stretch Shulman's (1986) concept of knowledge growth in teaching and his later concept of wisdom of practice (Shulman, 1987) to potentially make it more applicable to contemporary times is that of self-knowledge awareness. Emerging from the teachers' interviews was the notion of the importance of having processing time or time to be reflective. As teachers, we give our students processing time. This time can allow for thinking a concept through, understanding where and how it fits, working with it, and practicing it for mastery. Teachers are often not afforded this much needed time.

One teacher mentioned, "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" when it comes to rapid program changes. The pros and cons of what works are not considered

when something "shiny and new" is implemented. The whole thing is often tossed aside. "Out with the old; in with the new." A teacher recounted how she was told by an administrator that she could no longer use the old, district approved, grammar series she had been using for nearly 6 years because it was outdated. The teacher felt she "effectively used this resource as a tool to help her students learn grammar basics. Training for the new curriculum had not been scheduled. There was nothing to replace it at that time: just get rid of those old books." Another teacher spoke of a time years ago, when

> teachers were masters of their subject matter or what they taught, but now with this new program, that new program, adopting two new curriculums in 2 years, having to use this new computerized reading program and on and on, something new year after year. When do we get to master anything?

A different teacher mentioned how she felt like she was "a brand-new teacher in survival mode, shooting from the hip, instead of a 15-year veteran" with all the new programs.

Sentiments like these cause me to believe that there is a need for reflective processing time in order for teachers to realize that sense of mastery they once had, which was not specified by Shulman (1986) as an element of knowledge growth for effective teaching. Teachers tend to stick with what they know, and the lack of familiarity or reflective processing time with a new program or curriculum can lead to the program not being implemented or the program not being as effective as intended. This could also be a reason why professional development does not positively impact teaching practices. An element such as reflective processing time for teachers to assess their own levels of

proficiency and comfort, could be added to strengthen Shulman's knowledge growth in teaching concept.

Findings in Regard to Current Research on Professional Development

Several findings within the teachers' experiences mirror those found in the literature including the teachers' reported definition of professional development, their reported descriptions of professional development being ineffective and inadequate, and their lack of involvement in planning and designing of their professional development activities. The participating teachers defined professional development as improving teaching practices through advanced knowledge while remaining current with the latest research on teaching and learning. This definition supports the definition of professional development as reported by Darling-Hammond (2013); DeVries et al. (2013), Fuller (2011), and Smylie (2014).

Gulamhussein (2013), Killion (2013), and Mizell (2010) agreed that the professional development received by teachers was ineffective for meeting the challenges of the classroom. Mizell reported that professional development is often ineffective because a small cohort of teachers attended a 3- to 5-day training on a new curriculum that is condensed to a single day workshop format for all other teachers responsible for using the new curriculum. I also found this reported by a teacher who considered professional development to be watered down. The teachers I interviewed felt they left professional development training sessions with little to no new knowledge, as found by Gravani (2012), Mackay (2015), and Postholm (2012) who claimed that teacher learning

is not likely to occur apart from taking their previous knowledge, experiences, and needs into account.

Teachers are typically not involved in the planning or designing of their own professional development activities (Gulamhussein, 2013; Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Smylie, 2014). I found that only three of the eight participants in this study reported being involved in planning and designing professional development activities in the last school year. The extent of one of these teachers' participation was completing a site survey of needs that, according to the Oregon Department of Education (2014), does not provide the robust needs assessment for planning quality professional development. Two other teachers went through a process of planning and designing professional development for other teachers, but their experiences were from 4 years in the past. Mackay (2015) and Potelea and Toma (2015) suggested that teachers be consulted first, but that is often not the case.

Additional Findings

Two additional findings emerged that may be original contributions to understanding the professional development experiences of elementary teachers. The teachers felt that the lack reflective processing time needed to master new materials was provided. Elementary teachers are interested and desire to be actively involved in meaningful professional development. The results of my study indicated that elementary teachers, in addition to middle school and high school teachers studied by Allen and Penuel (2015), Gravani (2012), and DeVries et al. (2013), are disconnected from active involvement in the planning and design of their own professional development. In finding

that the voices, experiences, knowledge, and talents or the professional capital of elementary teachers are excluded from their professional development, my findings are similar to those of researchers like Gulamhussein (2013), Mackay (2015), Potolea and Toma (2015), and Smylie (2014).

This second finding may also be an original contribution to understanding elementary teachers' experiences with professional development. The teachers in this study expressed a desire to be actively involved in professional development. When asked how they would plan and design professional development for teachers, the participants' responses reflected characteristics of effective professional development. Their outlines for their professional development sessions began with talking to teachers to assess learning needs, desires, and concerns then movement toward the best ways of meeting those needs, desires, and concerns to include delivery, methods of instruction, and materials. This provided evidence of findings related to meaningful professional development similar to those outlined by Learning Forward (2011) and The Center for Great Teaching and Learning (2013) who provide standards and guidelines for effective professional development.

Limitations of the Study

The findings from this study cannot be generalized due to the small population of eight teachers studied from one district in California. Although this was sufficient for reaching a point of saturation in the data of the teachers' experiences, broadly applying the findings of this study could be challenging.

I was the sole person responsible for collecting the data. Potential researcher bias existed due to the fact that I worked in the district, taught and 4th and 5th grades for the majority of my career, and I have attended professional development trainings with one or more of the participants. I kept a researcher's journal as a means for separating my thoughts, opinions, and experiences from those of the participants. I used member checking to allow each participant to review the descriptive interpretation of their responses to ensure accuracy of their intended responses.

Recommendations

Following are suggestions for future research and future practice.

Further Research

Several recommendations for further research emerged. The literature on professional development contained guidelines for effective professional development programs, justifications for professional development, and descriptions of various types of professional development (Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013). The literature on professional development addressed strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes of professional development (DeVries, Jansen, & Van de Grift, 2013; Killion, 2013; Oregon Department of Education, 2014). What was missing from the literature on professional development was an understanding of teachers' active involvement and input in the planning and designing of the professional development sessions they attend (Mackay, 2015; Potolea & Toma, 2015; Wadesango & Bayaga, 2013).

I provided interpretations of a small cohort of 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers from three neighborhood schools about teachers' experiences with professional development and their level of involvement with the planning and design of professional development. Additional studies regarding elementary teachers' active involvement in planning and designing their professional development activities are needed at the elementary level. These additional studies could involve a greater number or range of elementary teachers, include Kindergarten through 5th grade teachers as participants, or invite elementary teachers from a larger pool of schools to participate to understand if the perceptions I found are common.

Studies of professional development designs that incorporate varying levels (low, medium, high) of teacher professional capital would be beneficial. Studies of professional development ventures that are successful at increasing teachers' knowledge content of subject matter, pedagogy, and curriculum could also extend knowledge in this area. A case study of a district where professional development evolved from limited use of teachers in planning professional development to one where teacher involvement in planning and design of professional development is high is another consideration for future study. A case study of such an environment could provide guide lines for making the transition and incorporating better practices that could be replicated in similar environments.

One last recommendation for further research would be a study on what teachers do to compensate for lack of professional development. Two teachers in this study changed grade levels and received no additional professional development from the

district. It would be interesting to study teachers' coping mechanisms in specific cases like the two teachers that changed grade levels or in general when learning needs just are not met. Findings of an exploratory study of this nature would be interesting because teachers are experiencing levels of success in their classrooms in spite of the quality of professional development they receive and having a picture of how this is done could prove to be insightful.

Future Practice

A recommendation that could address teachers' desire to be actively involved in the planning and design of their professional development and the issue of the lack of reflective processing time is to restructure current professional development practices to include teacher think tanks for professional practices (TTTPP), which I derived from my own experience and the findings of this research. School districts already allocate funds for professional development. Changing the structure, format, and function of teachers' professional development experiences could enhance the current good teaching practices already taking place and facilitate easier implementation of new programs. TTTPPs would have several components: expert trainers, surveys, training topics, follow-ups, and appraisals.

The TTTPP would begin with two to four elementary teachers who are trained and certified to conduct professional learning experiences for adult learners. Surveys inventorying teachers' experiences, talents, learning needs, and current classroom challenges would be conducted by the four trained elementary teachers and the results compiled into a database. The survey information would be used to identify areas of

teacher strengths, interests, needs, concerns, and topics for training. In addition to deriving training topics from the surveys, other new topics like brain development or developing a growth mindset would be included if requested by teachers. The follow-ups would be scheduled and consist of time allocated for the processing of information, reflection, observations, or debriefing.

Appraisals would be used as a form of accountability. Like an evaluation, an appraisal would include information about the topic or problem, features about the topic or suggested solutions for the problem, the teachers involved, follow-ups that were scheduled, and the outcome. Completed appraisals would be viewed by the core group of TTTPP teachers and district personnel responsible for scheduling the professional development sessions as well as the superintendent and the union president. Scanned or hardcopies of the appraisal form would be filed for later reference.

Utilizing the survey results, teachers' experiences, concerns, and interests could be addressed. Teachers experiencing certain challenges can be matched with experienced teachers in efforts to ameliorate the challenge. For example, teachers concerned about the growing the number of students with autism and other learning disorders in their general education classrooms could be addressed with training sessions on autism or other learning disorders lead by experts who can provide teachers with a better understanding of the disorder(s) and equip them with some behavior management and teaching strategies. Teachers who expressed interests for time to become more familiar with the mandated curriculum materials could have time allocated from a portion of designated professional development days to meet this need.

A program such as TTTPP can allow for greater flexibility in meeting teachers at the point of their needs and address their concerns in a timely manner. Thus, a distinguishing feature of the TTTPP compared to professional learning communities (PLC) mentioned later, is that the TTTPP would be more teacher centered and driven, an aspect supported by the work of Dobbs, Ippolito, and Charner-Laird (2017), where PLCs are more administratively driven. Dobbs et al. found that involving teachers in decision-making processes about their learning can produce meaningful professional development. The TTTPP program would not replace, but work alongside district mandated professional development topics with the goal of enhancing the professional development experiences of elementary teachers. Most districts allocate a certain number of days, hours, and dollars for professional development. Depending on the need, that time can be segmented as district directed time and TTTPP time.

This study showed that elementary teachers are interested and desire to be actively involved in meaningful professional development. Professional development activities for teachers have been found to have better outcomes when the experiences teachers bring with them are incorporated (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010; Postholm, 2012; Stoll et al., 2012). It can be concluded that using their professional capital, knowledge, and experiences and taking more of a leadership role in regards to professional development, could shift and move toward what researchers have identified as effective professional development practices.

In addition, this study provided evidence in support of the implementation of PLC. A PLC is an ongoing endeavor in which teachers and administrators work and learn

collaboratively and collectively building shared knowledge that improves teaching teams, schools, and student learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). This sort of environment would foster the type collaboration and cohesion spoken of by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) and The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (2013) and involve elementary teachers in the planning and design decisions of their professional development making it more responsive to teachers' needs as mentioned by Desimone (2011) and Wadesango and Bayaga (2013) and thus causing positive change in classroom teaching practices that meet the learning needs of students according to Gulamhussein (2013) and Mizell (2010).

As an elementary teacher who shares the desire to have a greater impact on teaching as a whole, but has experienced that sense of disempowerment and lack of opportunity to reach beyond the classroom due to the non-teacher centered professional development practices currently used, I support Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of incorporating and making the most of what teachers can contribute to make teaching better for colleagues and students. From my experiences, teachers have a wealth of accumulated knowledge. Teachers are also the ones working with students on a day-to-day basis compared to those directing or guiding the professional development of teachers but have not been in the classroom for years. Teaching is fluid and dynamic where some things change, some things stay the same, and some things are cyclical. I believe that having professional development practices that are more teacher-centered would go a long way towards addressing current needs, provide an outlet for shared experiences, and have a greater of impact on classroom teaching practices.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study could potentially be used by administrators and those responsible for planning and designing professional development for teachers to consider the professional capital possessed by teachers as valuable as well as consider and reevaluate the effectiveness of current professional development practices. Actively involving teachers in the planning and design stages of professional development could improve communication between administrators and teachers and positively impact the quality, effectiveness, and success of the professional development teachers receive. Teachers would possibly feel their voices are heard because their experiences, concerns, and needs would be met and student learning might improve. Teachers may benefit from having a greater role in the planning and design of their professional development activities (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, Gravani, 2012; Potolea & Toma, 2015). Effective professional development is said to be responsive to teachers' needs and causes positive change in classroom teaching practices that meet the learning needs of students (Gulamhussein, 2013; Mizell, 2010). In addition, a reflective processing time component could be added to the current structure of professional development activities.

Conclusion

This study explored the professional development experiences of eight 3rd through 5th grade Southern California elementary teachers. Many of the teachers' experiences exemplified findings in the literature on professional development. The teachers in this study found the professional development they received to be ineffective, inadequate, and lacking quality. The teachers desire meaningful and worthwhile professional

development. They also have a desire and would welcome the opportunity to be actively involved in the planning and design of their professional development. Researchers like Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Mackay (2015), Potolea and Toma (2015) Shulman (1986), Smylie (2014), and Wadesango and Bayaga (2013) presented the effectiveness of professional development when there is teacher buy-in and teachers have an active role planning and designing of professional development. Hargreaves and Fullan believed that the effectiveness of the teaching profession as a whole can be elevated when teachers are viewed as leaders and become more actively involved in matters that impact the profession. Professional development greatly impacts the teaching profession. Listening to teachers in regards to their professional development would be a great place to start empowering them. The teachers in this study also expressed the desire to once again become masters of their craft infusing “the new” with “the tried and true”. Giving them time and space to process and reflect will allow them to do just that.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I used this protocol for each of the interviews.

1. Interviews will be conducted mutually agreed upon times and locations.
2. The purpose of the interview will be discussed with the interviewee.
3. Permission to tape the interview will be attained.
4. Interviewee questions will be answered before the interview begins.
5. The guided open-ended questioning technique will be used.
6. The researcher will ask follow-up questions when necessary to maintain the flow of discussion.
7. The researcher will make note of any useful information like voice inflections, hesitancy, and body language.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview questions pertaining to the research questions are listed below.

For Research Question: 1

How do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary school teachers define professional development?

1. How do you define the purpose of professional development?
2. What is professional development to you?

   Possible Probe

   a. Why do you attend professional development at your school site or in the district?

For Research Question: 2

What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development training at their school or in their district?

3. Describe school or district professional development experiences you have had in the last 12 months.

   a. What instructional strategies have you learned from professional development training that you thought were beneficial?

   b. Can you describe a time when you used one of these instructional strategies in your classroom?

   c. What curricular guidelines have you learned from professional development training that you thought were beneficial?

   d. Can you describe a time when you used one of the curricular guidelines in your classroom?

4. Can you describe how your learning needs as a teacher were met or not met?

For Research Question: 3

How have Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers participated in the planning and designing of professional development training at their school or in their district?

5. Can you describe a time when you participated in the planning and design of professional development in your school or for the district in the last 12 months?
6. Can you describe the extent of your involvement in the planning and design of professional activities?

   Possible Probes:

   a. What components did the professional development session contain?
   b. What type of materials did you use?
   c. Are there any ways you incorporated teachers' knowledge, experiences, needs, and interests? If so how?
   d. How did you structure the professional development activities so that they were relevant to improving teachers' instructional practices?

7. How did your involvement in the planning and design of professional development activities facilitate the advancement of teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach in your professional development session?

8. What materials did you use in your professional development session to increase teachers' understanding of the curriculum they teach?
9. How do you think your involvement in the planning of the professional development session equipped teachers with instructional strategies to use in their classrooms?
10. How do you think your involvement in the planning of professional development session empowered teachers with knowledge of how students learn?

For Research Question: 4

What ideas do Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers have in planning and designing professional development training at their school or in their district?

11. If given the opportunity to plan and design professional development activities for teachers in your school or in your school district, what would it look or feel like? (I will listen for the following components and use the questions as necessary to probe if the area is not mentioned.)

    Possible Probes:

    a. How might you incorporate teachers' knowledge, experiences, needs, and interests?
    b. How might you structure the professional development activities so that they are relevant to improving teachers' instructional practices?

12. What might you do to facilitate the advancement of teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach in your professional development session?

13. What materials might you use in your professional development session to increase teachers' understanding of the curriculum they teach?
14. How might your professional development session equip teachers with instructional strategies to use in their classrooms?
15. How might your professional development session empower teachers with knowledge of how students learn?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C: Codes and Themes

Below is a sample of the tables I used to identify codes and themes based on participants' responses.

Codes for RQ 2: What are Southern California 3rd through 5th grade elementary teachers' interpretations of professional development at their school or in the district?

Participant's Words	Codes	Theme	RQ Focus
Drinking from a fire hose - D Throwing things at us – J, M No time to practice or work with – P, C Presented with 10,000 skills at one time; nothing sticks, benefits no one – P, D, G	Too much at one time Inundating	Overwhelming	Describing professional development
Watered down – T, C Only a few receive 1st hand training. – T, P What was the purpose? – G, M 30% helpful - G Just pulled together – T, D, M Done for the sake of doing - M 45-minute training on laptops without laptops – J After thought – T, P	Watered down After thought Not relevant	Ineffective	
Just sitting – T, M, P, E Large groups – G, C Not engaged – G, C, P Lacks active hands-on experiences – G, J, E Long meetings without purpose – M, G, D	Passive Lecture style	Ineffective	
Involuntary – all eight Have to go – P, G, M, D No choice – all eight	Mandated Must attend	Ineffective	
Bandwagon – C, J Latest hot topic – C, P, M	Trendy Latest buzz word	Inadequate	
Programs change too rapidly – M, P, T, C New program(s) every year – J, G, E Throw out baby with bath water – J, E, D	Unstable Lacks continuity	Inadequate	
Where is the proof that what teachers receive is best practice? - P Presented by publishers or those removed from classroom – E, D, C, J, G, M,	Questionable It is research based?	Inadequate	
Try to glean at least one useful concept – E, D, M, G	Lacks applicability Lacks usefulness	Inadequate	

Detached from what occurs in the classroom – all eight			
Presented one time – J, P, M, C, E Teachers expected to master with minimal information – T, J, E, C One training session is not enough – J, C, P, M Singular topics never revisited – J, P, M, No reflective piece – P, J, T	Lacks follow through No feedback element	Inadequate	
Teachers don't feel safe to ask questions – P, J, M	Lacks safety	Ineffective	